

Take Home Worship – Sunday August 30, 2020

By Rev. Julie Lebrun - Inlet United Church, Port Moody BC

This is prepared as an alternative to worship during this time of COVID 19 while we are not able to meet in person. I hope this find you well. Please pass it on to anyone you think might appreciate it. This week the sermon is written in my speaking format, so punctuation is different. We also have an online service. Check our website at www.inletunited.ca.

Opening Prayer

Prayer, we quiet our hearts and minds to hear the word of God in our midst today. Amen

Scripture: Exodus 3: 1-15 (NRSV)

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you'"

Reflection

What is it like to know something...to know it in your bones?

Something big, something important, when you don't fully understand how it can be so.

For Moses it seemed to come out of nowhere.

He was walking in the desert in Median

He was married, had a child, part of a bigger family

He was keeping the flock...sheep, most likely ...

And then he sees it

He sees the world in a new way

He understands his role/purpose in the world in a new way

He notices a bush, it's burning... but not burning up

Something is different, it gets his attention,

Corner of his eye...he says, "I must turn aside and look"

He could have easily dismissed it

Could have said, "I've got to concentrate on my flock, watch what I'm doing"

I makes me wonder, is God trying to get our attention

To call me to some area of need where my help is needed?

What are the burning bushes near me...do I need to turn aside and look closer?

What does Moses hear when he takes a closer look?

He hears "Moses, Moses"

He answers, "here I am"

Come no closer, remove the sandals of your feet you are standing on holy ground

Wow talk about a holy moment!

Moses could have turned away...

God reassures him, God of your father, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God gives Moses the message of what he is to do.

Moses is to go back to Egypt and tell the Pharaoh to free the Hebrew people who are working as slaves.

Ok this is one of those moments -- Moses knows deep down... this is what needs to happen.

He knows it so deep down that he tried to run away from it.

This moment of Moses understanding from God that he is to go back and stand up for the oppressed people of Egypt is the culmination of all the years of his life.

It drew together everything inside of him

-of being born when Hebrew baby boys were ordered by the Pharaoh to be killed in the river

-of being rescued by the Princess, the Pharaoh daughter

-of being nursed by his own mother till he was older

-then raised in the palace by Pharaoh's daughter

-of growing up with 2 identities---born Hebrew---raised Egyptian, a person of privilege

-of witnessing the oppression and abuse put on the Hebrew people

-of standing up for a Hebrew man by killing an Egyptian man

-of needing to run away from it all...to Median...where he was now

His whole life was in this moment - when he hears God - Go to the Pharaoh - tell him to set the people free.

Moses could not turn away from this...

He questioned what was being asked of him...Who am I that I should go to the Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?

-who am I to speak up for the person being bullied at school or work?

-who am I to speak up for the Black Lives Matter movement?

-who am I to speak up for accessible treatment for people experiencing addiction?

-who am I to cry out for equal rights for all people regardless of their sexual orientation? Or gender identity?

-who am I to speak up for safe practices in my work place?

-who am I to dream that our congregation's make a difference in people's lives...creating places of connection, growth, and seeking healing in our world?

-who am I to think we can build a new building and create affordable housing?

-who am I to... fill in the blank for yourself...

-Like Moses, we say, it's too much...who am I...?

And God reassures, I am WHO I am

This is God's way of saying I will be with you...you are not alone.

We are at a new time in history in North America and the world.

We are becoming acutely aware of prejudice and inequities that have been going on for many decades.

Jacob Blake, another black man was shot in United States this week.

At times when, I watch the news, the world can seem overwhelming these days. And yet, I think we are on the eve of a new time. A new time of freedom and equality that is long overdue for black people and indigenous people.

I think we are also at a new time of treatment for addiction in BC. With the knowledge of 175 people who died in July, we are forced into becoming aware of this crisis.

We are also becoming aware of injustices and prejudices against black people and indigenous people. It has always been happening, only now we are seeing it covered in the media.

Knowing how bad it is, is the first step to addressing it.

I believe it is possible for these huge systemic issues to change.

When activist organizers and ordinary people speak up or march together general attitudes can change...leading to government policies and practices changing. In BC we know if a safe drug supply can be given to people with severe addictions deaths would decrease...as well as crime and suffering.

I heard an amazing speech on CBC radio this week. It was a person in recovery from addiction sharing his story and advocating for treatment and safe drug supply for people with addiction. He was articulate and passionate about this topic. His speaking up makes a difference to everyone who hears him. It shows that like Moses, anyone can make a difference. We don't need special training or expertise. Throughout the bible God calls on ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

I was also moved this week by the Mr. Masai Ujiri, President of the Toronto Raptors basketball team. You may remember, when the Raptors won last year a security guard pushed him away and refused to let him speak and allow him on the court to celebrate with his team. In an interview this week Masai Ujiri spoke of his optimism of the future for his children, even though he has experienced such prejudice. He talked about the changes on the horizon. The changes people are working for now.

We know it in our bones, when something is not right. When people are not being respected and allowed their freedom. Any time the humanity of a person is ignored, is a burning bush for us to notice and act. Whatever your position in life, do what you can, where ever you are.

Yes, it feels overwhelming, but God is with us. The "I am" God is with us andpulls everything together...all the parts of life...into something of hope...a vision of freedom and respect for all people beyond what we even think is possible.

Our job is to be like Moses and simply need to say...here I am Lord...here I am.

May it be so, Amen.

Closing Prayer

(adapted from "Prayer for Our Community" by Richard Rohr)

O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us.

May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings.

Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other's burdens and the weight of glory.

Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world.

Be with us in grief...our own and the grief of those whom we love and serve in our church community.

May your peace and strength infuse us all.

Be with us in joy...our own moments of it and those we celebrate with others in our lives.

Offer us the awareness to notice God-moments every day as we move about our lives.

Be with us in our in-between...in the fluctuating of emotions, in the frantic busyness and in the boredom and frustration, in the lack of energy and motivation and in the ticking off of to-do lists, in our bursts of productivity and in our moments of blessed rest.

Help us to remember your unwavering presence in all of it. . . . Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all your holy names, O God. Amen.