

September 20, 2020 New Beginnings Pt. 1 Exodus 3:1`-14

Moses had left Egypt, the pressure cooker of Empire, to pursue the quiet life. And on the surface of things it looks like he has succeeded. He has found a job, as a shepherd. He has found a wife who would go with him...anywhere. His work is low pressure. He watches the flocks of his father-in-law, leads them to green pasture, and quiet water.

Barbara and I have owned the farmhouse for 30 years. And through the time we have spent there, I have gotten to know about two men who opted out of the rat race, for the quiet life. One worked on Bay Street, in Toronto, trading stocks, trying to make a fortune, working long hours, some would say he had no life at all. One day he cashed in his chips, bought a house in Marmora, and a tractor: one of those trucks that can pull 50 foot trailers. He loved it.

The second man also worked on Bay Street in Toronto. A former reeve of Madoc Township told me he made a fortune. And lost it. He cashed in his chips and bought a farm with lots of trees on it, and has supported himself, living the simple life, selling fire wood by the cord. And he did odd jobs on the side for grocery money.

Life can turn on a dime. We have been reminded of that simple truth as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic: the plague of 2020. We are able to worship in this sanctuary this morning for the first time since mid March. And as the

numbers continue to climb, I am forced to wonder how long this will last. Only time will tell. But for the moment, we are able to be here in this sacred space, together, to worship the Lord our God whom we know in the person of Jesus Christ, and whom we experience in the presence of the Holy Spirit. I thank God for your presence and the privilege of being with you. I thank God that we are as healthy as we are. And I thank God that we are living in the part of the province we are calling home.

Why read the story of Moses and the burning bush this morning? Very simply, it is a story about a moment in which a man's life changed forever. It is the moment in which Moses became a name that would be recognized throughout human history. The Jews know who Moses was. The followers of Islam know who Moses was. Christians know Moses unforgettable Biblical stories: his confrontation with Pharaoh, the crossing of the Red Sea, the Ten Commandments, the Promise Land! Well it all starts at the burning bush..."Moses saw that though the bush was on fire, it did not burn up." You don't see that every day! A bush totally engulfed in flames of fire, and nothing reduced to ash...and the fire did not spread. He could not believe his eyes. He had to take a closer look. Feel the heat. Try to understand what was happening. That's when he heard the voice calling him from this miraculous, mysterious fire.

That is where we are this morning. For all that we have been through in the past seven months...the inability to

believe that a virus could sweep around the globe, make a hundred and forty three thousand, Canadians sick, kill nine thousand two hundred and eleven, shut down our national economy and cause governments of provinces, territories and the nation to work together for the benefit of the population. We have been scared. We have been isolated. We have feared no one would believe us if we tried to tell our own stories. That's Moses standing too close to the bush that burns and is not consumed. And then God speaks to him and calls his name out of the heart of this holy fire that engulfs the burning bush.

My friends, brothers and sisters, we are involved in a faith journey like no other. We do not know how it is all going to turn out. We roller coaster from hope to fear, and hope to fear again. Cases in Ontario broke the 400 barrier yesterday. Toronto, Ottawa and Peel have seen roll backs. And we do face uncertainty, as to what will happen here.

I marvel at our Presbyterian ancestors who chose to make the burning bush the logo for this denomination. Amazing faith. Amazing wisdom. Faith that is ablaze with the fire of the Holy Spirit, and not consumed by the burning. Easter. Jesus rose from the dead. He walked with two of his disciples on the Road Emmaus, and because they did not understand what was happening, HE taught them from the Scriptures. And when Jesus departed from them what was their comment of what it had been like to listen to Jesus explanation? "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Stay tuned. The Lord God has called our names in the midst of fearful experiences. Are we prepared to say, “Here am I?” Well you already did when you joined with us by coming out this morning, or reading the message on line, or as delivered to you by a friend. The church of Jesus Christ did not go away during the days when we could not come into this holy space. We have not passed the offering plate for seven months, and yet we are close to being on budget. Jesus disciples, are still Jesus disciples. God’s people are still God’s people. And even more importantly the Lord is still the Lord God Almighty.

You know the science as well as I do, and you know the Bible reflects that truth. At this point there is no vaccine. So like in the times of Jesus we need to keep distance between ourselves and everyone else. We know a mask, or a face shield is another layer of protection. We know that self isolation, staying at home really helps. We have been doing it. Wash your hands frequently. If you have to go out and we do....use hand sanitizer and wear your mask when you have to go in to a store or someone else’s home, and when you come out. It is good for you and it is good for them.

And say your prayers. Not just for yourself. If you need to make a list of names and remember them. Bless them. Ask God to watch over them. When you need encouragement, and we do, read Psalm 23 or 46, “God is our refuge.” Stand near the burning bush and reflect on the soothing nature of the presence of God. We make a new beginning because God has

called us to come close to HIM. Jesus wants us to follow HIM. The Holy Spirit wants to reside in us. We begin. We crawl, we learn to walk. Most of all...we let HIM lead the way.

Let us pray;

Lord touch us with the holy fire of YOUR presence. Lead us and guide us, walk with us and help us cope with the uncertain nature of these times. Grant us your staff that we might lean on it. We are here, before YOU. Amen