

Evotional – 26 January 2014 – Moses at the burning bush

Background

Moses probably lived a little under 1,500 years before Christ. By this time the Israelites had been living in Egypt for around 400 years; they had grown from a small family into a massive one, and so the Egyptians started to feel threatened by them, and so they oppressed them. (See Exodus chapter 1.)

Then Pharaoh ordered that all new-born boys were to be killed, but Moses' parents took evasive action and Moses grew up in Pharaoh's household. One day he murdered an Egyptian he saw mistreating a fellow Israelite, and fled to the land of Midian (East of Egypt and South of the Promised Land) where he got married and settled down. (See Exodus chapter 2).

Forty years later we find him looking after his father-in-law's sheep when he has a life changing encounter ...

SEEING (Exodus 3:2-9)

In these eight verses there are ten words based on the Hebrew verb for 'seeing'; Moses saw something (God – although exactly what Moses saw is unclear); and God saw something (his people's suffering).

We may have mixed feelings about God 'seeing' us; like Moses (who was a murderer) we may have stuff we would prefer to keep hidden from God. But also like Moses (whose people were being oppressed) we may feel angry or bitter that if God sees, why doesn't he do something?

But however we feel, God sees. He sees what I did; he also sees what that person did to me and my people.

And God is God, and he will act on what he sees in his own way and according to his timetable. When we try to take things into our own hands (as Moses had done 40 years before), it won't do any good.

Questions:

1. Are we ready to see God, or is there old stuff, or silly stuff getting in the way?
2. Are we impatient that God has not showed up when we feel he should have done?

BEING (Exodus 3:13-15)

In those days names really mattered, and to say a god's name meant to call on his power.

God's name is not straightforward! In Hebrew there are basically two tenses – a perfect tense which is usually used about things that happened in the past, and an imperfect tense which is usually used about things that are happening now or are going to happen in the future. And God defines himself as Yahweh (often written as 'LORD' in English Bibles, to respect the fact that Jewish people regard it as too holy to pronounce). It is an imperfect verb, so it means 'I am' but could also mean 'I will be'. There are probably two main aspects of what this name tells us about God:

- I am God; I am eternal; nobody caused me; I am master of my own destiny; I am the only one who truly is; I am not to be put in a box; I am to be approached with reverence
- I am with you; I will remain with you; I will be there for you; you can count on me; I am to be approached with confidence

Yes it is hard to hold all that together in our minds, but that's what comes of asking God to reveal himself! And everything Moses was going to do as leader and prophet was based on this knowledge of God.

Questions:

3. When you think of God, do you look backwards, as perhaps Moses did, to a past experience, past intimacy? Or do you think that you'll make more time for him in the future? Or do you think of the here and now? Do you need to broaden your focus?
4. Do you want to know this God; do you want to call on his power; do you want to give him control of your present and future? If so, keep reading ...

GOING (Exodus 3:10-12, 16-20)

- God: 'Go, I am sending you'
- Moses: 'Are you sure it's me?' (the first of his four attempts to get out of the job!)
- God: 'Yes, and I will be with you ... so go; go, it will not be easy but I will do it for you'

Look at v12; God promises a sign, but not until afterwards! That's so like God isn't it? Throughout our Christian lives he gives us things to do that we don't feel up to doing. And God promises to be with us, but we don't sense his presence or we want a clearer sign. We could stay looking after the sheep in the desert, or we could go in obedience to God and find ourselves looking after a nation of annoying people in the desert; we know which is easier, but which is best, which is God's voice? But when we have done it, then we will stand on the mountain, and will know God better and will worship him.

Questions:

5. Is God saying to you 'go'? I will be with you and I will do it for you, but first you need to go; do you really want to worship me? If so, go!
6. Read Luke 24:27. What do you think Jesus might have said about how this incident from Moses' life pointed to him?