

ST. ANDREW'S, BLACKROCK & BRAY - 4TH JULY 2021

OUT OF & INTO; MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH (EXODUS 3&4)

“Welcome to our ‘Church at Home’ transcript for the 4th July 2021. Today we are continuing our new series called 'Out Of & Into' looking at the life of Moses in the Bible. Today's sermon about Moses and the Burning Bush comes from Exodus 3 & 4, and reminds us of who God is.” - Rev. Andrew Gill

Call to Worship – Hebrews 1:1-3

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God,
your Son Jesus Christ has taught us
that what we do
for the least of your children
we do also for him.
Give us the will to serve others,
as Jesus served us.
He gave up his life and died for us,
but you raised him from the grave,
and now he lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen

Reading - Exodus 3:1-14

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. 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, has sent me to you": This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations.

Sermon - 'Moses and the Burning Bush'

Do you like being interrupted? How do you feel when you are going about your day and then you hear a beep on your phone or a knock at the door? I imagine it would largely depend on who it was, what they wanted, and what you were doing at the time. Sometimes we want to avoid all kinds of interruptions, we're busy, we've got plans, we've got things to do, and we don't want anyone coming along distracting or delaying us. But then there are other times we welcome interruptions, we're bored, we've got no plans, we've got nothing to do, and we long for a friends to come along and invite us to something much better. Life is full of interruptions and encounters with people that will determine the outcome of our life.

Last week we started a new series called 'Out Of and Into' looking at the life of Moses in the book of Exodus. Today we are reflecting on a story when Moses was interrupted by God, and perhaps as we look at this story we too will have an encounter with the living God.

Exodus 3:1 says, *"Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God."* Moses's life was full of interruptions, as a baby his life was interrupted when Pharaoh made an order to kill all the Hebrew boys. Then when his parents put him in a basket in the river his life was interrupted again, but this time by the compassion of Pharaoh's daughter who adopted him as her own son. Then years later as an adult his life was interrupted with the guilt of sin. In Exodus 2:11-15 we read the story where Moses saw an Egyptian treating a Hebrew terribly. Moses stepped in and killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand, thinking no one saw. The next day he sees two Hebrews fighting and he tries to step in to stop them, and one of them says, 'Are you going to kill us like you killed that Egyptian?' Moses realised that he had been found out, and then the pharaoh discovered this and Moses had to flee Egypt as a criminal and he went to live in a place called Midian. Now his life is going to be interrupted once again.

This day started off normally for Moses, he was not on a pilgrimage or searching for God in any way. In fact he was probably in the wilderness precisely because he wanted to be left alone. While looking after the sheep he sees a bush on fire but it's not consumed, it is burning but flourishing. He goes to have a closer look, and a voice calls out his name and tells him that he's standing on holy ground. Then the voice identifies itself in v.6, *"Then he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,'"* This is not a talking bush, or a person hiding behind the bush, but God. And it is not any of the Egyptian gods that Moses would have learned about in the palace. This is the God that his birth father would have told him about in those stories about Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham, and the covenant that he made with them. Moses responds by hiding his face in awe because he is standing in the presence of the holy God.

The major theme that runs through Exodus 3 & 4 is *knowing God*. Already from these verses we have seen that God is holy, meaning that he is separate and totally other, he is pure and perfect, and he is above and beyond us in every way. Yet he is knowable. Our God is not a faceless power, or a distant abstract force, he is a person and we can know and relate to. And so as a person God speaks, we see the whole way through this chapter that God is talking with Moses. We know who God is because he has revealed himself to us. God speaks, and God sees, hears, and knows. Verse 7, *"I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I know their suffering."* God knows you. He knows your name, he knows the things that are keeping you awake at night, he sees the problems your family are facing, he hears your anxious prayers, and he knows about that doctor's appointment coming up this week. God knows, sees, hears and he acts. *"I have come down to rescue them out of that land and into a good and spacious land a land flowing with milk and honey."* God is coming to the rescue! He is going to bring his people out of their problems, and into the promised land.

But there is one more surprises in store for Moses, God continues in v.10, *"So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."* But Moses replies, 'God, are you sure you've got the right person? Is there another Moses around here? I can't be the one you want to send to do this?!" He is full of insecurity, and he lacks a sense of identity. Moses does not want to do this because he does not think he can. But notice how God replies in verse 12, he says, *"I am with you."* God does not give Moses a pep-talk, he simply says, 'I am with you.'

I can sympathise with Moses in this story. I think back to when I first started volunteering with CSSM in Greystones which is an outreach mission to children and young people. My first year on the team, I was 17 and excited to be involved, but I was terrified that I might have to give a talk. It was something that I could never do. I remember being in the meeting on the first day with the team and I looked at the list of and I saw that there were ten talks, and I looked around at the team and counted 11 people. So I just kept my eyes down and said nothing, and let everyone else do the volunteering. At that time it felt right, I was shy, awkward, and failing english in school. Who was I to give a talk to other people. I firmly believed it was something I could never be able to do. The following year I was back on the team and again determined that I would not be giving a talk. I looked on the list counted 10 talks, looked around the circle of leaders and only counted nine people! And that is when the main leader asked, 'Andrew which talk are you going to do?' I didn't want to do, I didn't think I could. But nervous as I was I agreed to do it, choosing to trust in God rather than myself. And God did not let me down.

I have learned that when I trust in God's presence I can do things that I never thought I could do, and that I can be who I never thought I could be. Still every Sunday morning when I get up to preach, I could think of a hundred reasons why somebody else should be doing it, but God has called me so I trust in God's presence. During the week when I'm facing a difficult task and

come face to face with my weaknesses I chooses to trust in the presence of God. As I try to live my life as a follower of Jesus, and I aim to be a good husband, and prepare to be a good father, I do so trusting that God is with me.

In the New Testament, we see that Jesus was always interrupting people. Getting into other peoples boats, inviting himself into peoples houses, talking to people on the street. Saying things like, 'Come follow me,' 'Don't be afraid,' and, 'Your faith has saved you.' And that is to be expected, as Jesus is the full revelation of God, it is through him that we can know God. When we look to the cross we see that sin was interrupted totally, and in the resurrection death disrupted eternally. Still today, by his Holy Spirit, he is interrupting us. Perhaps today as you have been reading this you have felt the Holy Spirit interrupting you, wanting to break into your life with the knowledge of God. Maybe he wants to interrupt your loneliness, your self-doubt, or your fears with his presence.

Closing Prayer

Father God,
Thank you that you know me.
Thank you that you see me,
hear me, and care for me.

Thank you for sending Jesus,
so that I can know you.

Send your Holy Spirit to help me know you more,
and to make you known to others.

As I live my life today
may I know the joy that the 'I am' is with me.
Amen