

September 2, 2018

Animals of the Bible

Busy Bees: Labor of Love

First Reading ~ *Numbers 13:32 - 14:8*

Out of fear they spread false reports about the land they had explored and said, "The land that we scouted is a country that consumes its inhabitants. And the people we saw there were huge! We saw giants there – the descendants of the Anakim, a whole race of giants, and we felt like mere grasshoppers, and so we must have seemed to them!

At this the whole community broke out with loud cries, and even in the night the people wailed. The Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron and said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or this desert (wilderness). Why should YHWH bring us to this land only for us to fall dead in battle and leave our spouses and children to become spoils of war? The best thing we can do is return to Egypt!" And they talked among themselves of choosing a leader to lead them back to Egypt.

Then Moses and Aaron threw themselves face down on the ground before the whole Israelite community gathered there. Joshua and Caleb, members of the scouting team, tore their clothes, and told the whole Israelite community gathered there, "The land we passed through and scouted is extremely good land. If YHWH is pleased with us, we will be led into it and it will be given to us, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Second Reading

~ *adapted from Barbra Brown Tailor in*
"An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith"

I began asking God to tell me what I was supposed to do. What was my designated purpose on this earth? How could I discover the vocation that had my name on it? Since this was an important prayer, I searched for the right place to pray it. The fire escape turned out to be an excellent place to pray. Doing something that scared me cranked up my courage. Escaping up instead of down prepared me for other reversals. There was not a chance anyone could sneak up on me. The wind smelled like the moon. I went up there so many times in the weeks that followed that I no longer remember which night it was that God finally answered my prayer. I do not think it was right at the beginning, when I was still saying my prayers in words. I think it came later, when I had graduated to inchoate sounds. Up on that fire escape, I learned to pray the way a wolf howls. I learned to pray the way that Ella Fitzgerald sang scat.

Then one night when my whole heart was open to hearing from God what I was supposed to do with my life, God said, "Anything that pleases you." "What?" I said, resorting to words again. "What kind of an answer is that?" "Do anything that pleases you," the still small voice said again, "and belong to me." At one level, that answer was no help at all. The ball was back in my court again, where God had left me all kinds of room to lob it wherever I wanted. I could be a priest or a circus worker. God really did not care. At another level, I was so relieved that I sledded down the stairs that night. Whatever I decided to do for a living, it was not what I did **but how I did it** that mattered. God had suggested an overall purpose, but was not going to supply the particulars for me. If I wanted a life of meaning, then I was going to have to apply the purpose for myself.