

August 20, 2017

Summer Sermon Series

"Mountains of the Bible: Mount Horeb...Mount Sinai...Mount Nebo (A Life Lived Between Mountains)"

First Reading ~ *Exodus 3:1-16a*

Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock deep into the wilderness Moses came to Horeb (Sinai), the mountain of God. The messenger of YHWH appeared to Moses in a blazing fire from the midst of a thornbush. Moses saw -- "The bush is ablaze with fire and yet isn't consumed!" Moses said, "Let me go over and look at this remarkable sight and see why the bush doesn't burn up!"

When YHWH saw Moses coming to look more closely, God called out from the midst of the bush, "Moses! Moses!" Moses answered, "Here I am." God said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground!"

"I am the God of your ancestors," the voice continued, "The God of Sarah and Abraham, the God of Rebecca and Isaac, the God of Leah and Rachel and Jacob!" Moses hid his face, afraid to look at the Holy One. Then YHWH said, "I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries under those who oppress them. I have felt their sufferings. Now I have come down to rescue them from the hand of Egypt, out of their place of suffering, and bring them to a place that is wide and fertile, a land flowing with milk and honey- the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

The cry of the children of Israel has reached me, and I have watched how the Egyptians are oppressing them. Now go! I will send you to pharaoh, to bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?" God answered, "I will be with you, and this is the sign by which you will know that it is I who have sent you. After you bring my people out of Egypt, you will all worship at this very mountain." But Moses said, "When I go to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you, if they ask me 'What is this god's name?', what am I to tell them?"

God replied, "I AM AS I AM. This what you will tell the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God spoke further to Moses, "Tell the children of Israel: YHWH, the I AM, the God of your ancestors, the God of Sarah and Abraham, of Rebecca and Isaac, of Leah and Rachel and Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my Name forever; this is the name you are to remember for all generations.

"Now Go."

Second Reading

~ adapted from Jon Kabat-Zinn in “Wherever You Go, There You Are”

There are outer mountains and inner mountains. Their very presence beckons to us, calls us to ascend. Perhaps the full teaching of a mountain is that you carry the whole mountain inside yourself, the outer one as well as the inner one. And sometimes you search and search for the mountain without finding it ... until the time comes when you are sufficiently motivated and prepared to find a way through, first to the base, then to the summit. The mountain climb is a powerful metaphor for life, the spiritual journey, the path of growth, transformation, discovery, and understanding. The arduous difficulties we encounter along the way embody the very challenges we need in order to stretch ourselves and thereby expand our boundaries. In the end, it is life itself which is the mountain, the teacher, serving us up perfect opportunities to do the inner work of growing in strength and wisdom. And we have a lot of learning and growing to do once we choose to make the journey. The risks are considerable, the sacrifices awesome, the outcome always uncertain. Ultimately, it is the climb itself which is the adventure, not just standing at the top.

First we learn what it's like at the base. Only later do we encounter the slopes, and finally, perhaps, the top. But you can't stay at the top of a mountain. The journey up is not complete without the descent, the stepping back and seeing the whole again from afar. Having been at the summit, however, you have gained a new perspective, and it may change your way of seeing forever.