

St John's Episcopal Church
Proper 17, 14th Sunday after Pentecost
Rev Brian C Justice

Psalm 105.1-6, 23-26
Exodus 3.1-15
Romans 12.9-21
Matthew 16.21-28

Holy Ground

The encounter between Moses and God at the Burning Bush.
One of the most decisive moments in world history.

It happened at Mt Horeb, which is another name for Mt Sinai.
That is where Moses and the Israelites would receive the Torah, that is, the Teaching of God.
But it all starts at the Burning Bush, where Moses receives his call to adventure.
And he receives a lot more than that.

Born into slavery in Egypt, Moses is an Israelite shepherd. And while tending his flock one day at Mt Horeb, he has some kind of transformative experience.
Something happens.

In the book of Exodus, we have a written account of the experience. But because "mountaintop experiences" are by definition indescribable, the account in Exodus is mythical, mystical, mysterious.

Moses sees a bush that appears to be in a flame of fire.
It burns but is not consumed.

Then he hears a Voice in the fire, "Moses, Moses!"
He replies, "Here I am."
The Voice says, "Come no closer, remove the sandals from your feet, you are standing on holy ground."

The Voice then gives Moses his calling, his vocation, his ministry in the world: Moses is to lead the Israelites on the Exodus, from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land.

Moses says, "I don't want to do it."

The Voice says, "You have to do it."

Moses says, "OK, I'll do it. But one question first. O Voice in the Burning Bush, what is your name?"

The Voice says, "I am."

Moses asks God – directly, point blank – "what is your name?"

God answers "I am."

God reveals God's name as the verb to be.

This is the deepest revelation that there is.

Profound theological meaning has been drawn out of this revelation by the mystics and masters.

But what we can say here – to make some sense of it -- is that God is the very ground of being itself.

Everything and everyone that is, is *in* and *of* and *by* and *through* and *from* God.

God is "the ground" out of which everything and everyone emerges.

Just as the Burning Bush grows out of the ground of Mt Horeb, everything and everyone – including you and I -- grows out of the ground of God.

When we realize this, we realize that the Burning Bush is everywhere.

Everything is the Burning Bush.

Everything is on fire with Divine Presence.

The Voice of God is speaking to us out of everything.

This is what I call "Sacramental Spirituality" because we start to see everything as a sacrament: as a vessel of God's life-giving, love-giving presence.

We will come to the altar today to share the consecrated bread and wine, which are for us, the body and blood of Christ.

With "Sacramental Spirituality" everything becomes the body and blood of Christ.

Nothing is left out.

No one is -- or ever will be -- left behind.

So, remove the sandals from your feet, you are standing on holy ground.

Amen.