

Trinity 15

Other than Jesus, Moses might well be the best-known character of the Bible. It is on him we are focusing this morning. But first a quick look back at where we have been.

During the Trinity season, we have been on a journey . . . a journey through what might be called salvation history.

We started with Genesis 1. Here we found God creating this amazing world in which you and I live, this world of birds and flowers, hills and valleys, streams and oceans, and pronouncing it good.

But then in Genesis 3 the scene changes dramatically. A roadblock descends in front of God's good creation project. God's human creatures rebel, try to have it their own way.

What follows is pretty grim. The first pair forfeit their intimate relationship with their Creator. There is disruption in family relationships: Cain slays his brother Abel. Even nature seems to be affected: thorns springs up and farming becomes hard work.

From Genesis 4 onward, we see God's response to human rebellion. Instead of scraping creation and starting over, He sets in place a plan of rescue. This rescue will come through a particular family, the family of Abraham.

So far, we have looked at a remarkable cast of characters as God's plan has moved forward: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (also known as Israel) and, for the last several weeks, Joseph.

Today our focus, as I have already mentioned, shifts to Moses.

His importance in the biblical story can sacredly be overstated. The Encyclopaedia Judaica begins its entry on him with these words:

“The Bible enshrines a galaxy of great men and women. Each of whom made a distinctive contribution to Jewish history and culture. Moses towers above them all. He is incomparable. He is not only a national leader. It is he who fashioned the nation of Israel transforming a hoard of slaves into a kingdom of priests.”

It is worth noting three additional facts about this towering Old Testament figure:

-- He is mentioned more than any other Old Testament character in the New Testament.

--His ministry parallels and prefigures that of Jesus. As Moses delivered God's people from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, so Jesus, the new, better Moses, will deliver them from the even greater bondage of sin and death.

--He is a man of many strengths but also of a number of weaknesses.

With that introduction, we turn now to today's reading from Exodus 2. But, before we look directly at this passage, I need to connect it to where we left off reading last week.

Genesis closes with the children of Israel in Egypt. Joseph has seen to it they are well taken care of. Eventually, though, at the ripe old age of 110, he dies. But before he does, he speaks these words to his brethren:

“God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.”

God is not going to leave them in Egypt. One day they will return and inherit the land promised to their fore-bearer Abraham. That is how Genesis ends . . . on a note of hope.

But, as Exodus opens, we find ourselves in quite a different world. Over 400 years have passed; the people have greatly multiplied; and they are no long honoured guests in the land of Egypt, but slaves.

At this point, Joseph's words of prophecy must have prompted them to ask: When? When, O God of our Fathers, are you going to visit us? When are you coming to save us?

No doubt, we find ourselves in a like situation today. For 2000 years, the Church has been praying, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Yet, as we look out on our world, we find manifold problems -- the coronavirus, people fearful to leave home, people sick and dying, violence and discord in the streets of many of our cities, turmoil in the political arena, fires and floods, and international unrest, to name a few. We know things have not as yet come right. Something is yet to happen.

Oh yes, we believed God's kingdom arrived with the death and resurrection of Jesus, but we don't see it out there on the streets and in the halls of government, or at least very plainly. Like the Hebrews of old, we too must ask: When?

Let us learn from the story of Moses patience. God will visit His people. In our case: Christ will come again. Until that time, may we not get discouraged. Rather, let us live, love, pray, hope and work. ///

The aspect of Exodus 2 on which I wish to focus particularly this morning comes towards the end of today's passage. It concerns Moses' response to God's call.

As a young man, Moses had it made. He was a prince in the Pharaoh's household, many commentators even suggesting he was in line to be Pharaoh's successor.

All the pleasures of Egypt were his. Yet, he threw it all away by choosing to identify with his enslaved kinsmen and their suffering.

As he became an adult, life placed before him a crossroad. There was way of Egypt with all her sensual pleasures and the way of God with all of its toil and sacrifice. Moses chose the latter.

Reflecting on Moses' dilemma, the writer of Hebrews in the NT says:

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”

Do we not face a like crossroad in our lives? Before us stands the way of the world and the way of Christ.

In 1873, John Selwyn travelled to Melanesia as a missionary. Melanesia, by the way, refers to a number of islands in the Pacific, somewhere between New Zealand and Australia. There he found tribes of cannibals. Making inroads for the Gospel in that place was not easy. You certainly did not want to be asked to stay for supper, or, worst still, to be supper!

A break came when a promising young man came to Christian faith. Selwyn, by this time was the Bishop of this region. Immediately, he recognized the gifts of this young man and rejoiced when he enthusiastically answered the call to the ordained ministry.

But on the day of his ordination, he abruptly changed his mind. No ordination was held. Instead, this young man decided to pursue what seemed a more glamorous career . . . to become a member of the police force, which he did. His gifts there were likewise recognised, and he quickly rose to the rank of sergeant. Then, one day he fell off a cliff and was paralysed.

Lying on a cot in a field hospital, he had vision. Christ was standing at the end of his bed, asking him why he had not gone His way.

He repented and at once found himself able to walk, and went on to be ordained. God used him mightily to bring the Gospel to the people of that region.

His story is pretty dramatic. Ours may not be so dramatic, Yet, we too face forks in the road.

The initial fork is: Will I follow Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour or will I follow what the Prayer Book calls the way of the world, the flesh and the devil?

But even after hearing and responding to the call of the Gospel, we face additional forks, perhaps daily ones.

Will I be true to the promises I made when I signed on as a follower of Jesus Christ?

Or, will I fritter away my days in lesser pursuits? Will mine be the way of sloth or service, love or indifference, witness or waste?

Allow me to close by saying: As Christ stood before the cot of the young man I have just told about, so He stands before each one of us, asking us to go His way.

Which way will it be for you?