**Wednesday 2nd September 2020**

**Read Psalm 27.**

This is one of my favourite Psalms – a Psalm of encouragement – full of promises of God’s provision and protection when times are hard – and hope and trust that things will improve.

And many of us have experienced for ourselves the truth in the penultimate verse:

“I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living”

**Read Exodus 3:1-15**

The reading today is a familiar one to most of us – where Moses encounters the Burning Bush.

Some years ago, Kate Brooke (who many of us will remember) felt God saying to her: “Expect the unexpected”, and over and over again I’ve been reminded of that. This year has certainly brought the unexpected [as someone once said “Don’t ever kid yourself that your life is sorted] and yet this is where we have often had the privilege of seeing God at work, even in the most unexpected. In the kindness of friends and neighbours, or the unexpected provision, or phone call, just when needed.

But equally there have been times when we have cried out in anguish and pain, and the heavens have seemed like brass. And yet, in our reading from Exodus God says, “ I have indeed seen the misery of my people . . . and have heard them crying out” And I know He still does today.

I felt the **Collect for today** from BCP was particularly appropriate:

Almighty and everlasting God,

Who art always more ready to hear than we are to pray,

And art wont to give us more than either we desire or deserve,

Pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy;

Forgiving us those things whereof our consciences are afraid,

And giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask,

But through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our LORD. **Amen**.

**Our Prayers:**

Lord, we cry out to you for those who feel they have no one to turn to, and their voice is not heard.

 For those whose homes are not places of safety

 For those who have no home

 For those whose governments are corrupt

 For those living alone, and are fearful of going out

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray too for those exhausted and bewildered by the circumstances they find themselves in.

 For families, especially those with young or disabled children

 For front line workers: medics, aid workers, delivery drivers

 For those who have lost their jobs and face an uncertain future

 For the frail and elderly, especially those in Care Homes

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray especially today for all those who are anxious about returning to school or college

 For teachers, lecturers, governors, children and parents

That you would calm their fears and bring your wisdom into every situation.

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We name before you now, LORD, any we know who are suffering in body, mind or spirit.

And we pray for ourselves, that we will always know how much we are loved by God.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

 Our Father in heaven,

 hallowed be your name,

 your kingdom come,

 your will be done,

 on earth as in heaven.

 Give us today our daily bread.

 Forgive us our sins

 as we forgive those who sin against us.

 Lead us not into temptation

 but deliver us from evil.

 For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are

 yours, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Let us, as children of a loving heavenly Father, remember the vow that Habakkuk made, even with all the disaster that had befallen:

“Yet, I will rejoice in the LORD. I will be joyful in God my Saviour”. Habakkuk 3:18

Are you able to echo Habakkuk’s vow?

Have you experienced God at work in the unexpected?

What is your favourite Psalm? And what might God be saying to you in it today?

Psalm 27 ends with a message for each of us:

“Wait for the LORD; be strong, take heart, and wait for the LORD”

*For those who would be interested, Nick wrote a monologue based on the Burning Bush, which I include below.*

### Exodus 3

Life was going OK. Yes, I missed the finery and privilege of my position in Egypt, but those memories were fading. I had a loving wife, a son and a job. The angst I had felt at seeing my peoples’ slavery, and the guilt and fear over that incident with the Egyptian guard were becoming distant memories; I didn’t need to worry myself about them any more.

Then, one day, it all changed. I had taken the flock further than usual, over towards Horeb, and was passing an isolated bush when it caught fire. It happens out in the open; a piece of stone catches the sun and heats up a leaf. Before you know it the whole of a bush is ablaze. This one, though, was different. Normally there is smoke rising from the fire, and you can see the bush shrivel up as the flames consume it.  Not this one - there was fire, but it just stayed the same. I went over to look more closely.

The first thing I noticed was the lack of heat; fierce flames, but no heat. As I stooped to look more closely, I heard a voice calling my name. It seemed to come from the bush, but also from all around. I looked up to see if there was anyone else there, and said “Here I am“.

“Step back and take off your shoes,” it said. “This is hallowed ground.”

I edged back a few paces, and took off my sandals.  The flames grew brighter and brighter. I lifted part of my cloak to shield my face. The flames were so intense I could see their outline, even through the thick material of the cloak. It was scary; I was frightened.

The voice told me that he was the God of my ancestors, that he had seen the slavery of his people in Egypt, had heard their cries of woe, and was going to rescue them and bring them to the land where Abraham had set them up in the first place. Then, the really scary bit, he said that he was sending me back to Pharaoh to make this happen! And, as a sign that it was really Him, we would worship him there - but not until it was all over, as if that would help my case.

Well, ‘the God of our ancestors’ was a bit of a remote concept for the Hebrews by this time. I could see me being questioned pretty closely about just who it was who was saying this, so I asked for a bit more details - a name perhaps?

“I AM WHO I AM” he said. “Tell your people I AM has sent you.”

He then outlined a strategy to use, but added that it wouldn’t work (some plan that was!).  At that point he would strike Egypt with all his wonders, at the same time making the Egyptians favourable towards us.

As I struggled with this last paradox, I thought “Please, can I just take the flock back to Jethro, and Zipporah’s home comforts?” So I did my best to argue. “I‘m a nobody. They won’t listen to me. I don’t speak very well…” I tried everything I could think of.

It was pointless, He wasn’t going to take no for an answer. He did give me a few tricks I could use to show I had some power behind what I was saying. Well, they might impress the Hebrews, but I knew they wouldn’t cut much ice with Pharaoh's magicians, who would soon put me in my place there.

Finally, in desperation, I pleaded with Him to send someone else. At that point He got angry - which reminded me how scared I was - but He did say that you, Aaron, my brother, would meet me, and that we could do this thing together, with you doing all the talking. Finally, He said “Now, go! Get on with it!”

With that the flames subsided.  After a minute, I lowered my cloak and looked. The bush had gone, leaving just a charred stub sticking up, about the height of my foot, and a faint suggestion of smoke drifting away.

So, that’s why you find us here, me and the whole family, on our way to Egypt. It was why I was so pleased to see you, brother. It was the first indication that I hadn’t been dreaming. Honestly, do you think we can do it? Can we really get our people back home?