

Making Space for God

Exodus 3-4

Settle Yourself Into Prayer-

Come to prayer gently. This is one of the great benefits of being on retreat; we can give up our haste for a few hours and bask in the spaciousness of time spent in the presence of God. So enter slowly and gently prepare to pray. After you have strolled around find a suitable place free from distraction. Assume a comfortable posture, breath deeply and adjust (in body, mind and heart) to the silence, the spaciousness and the stillness.

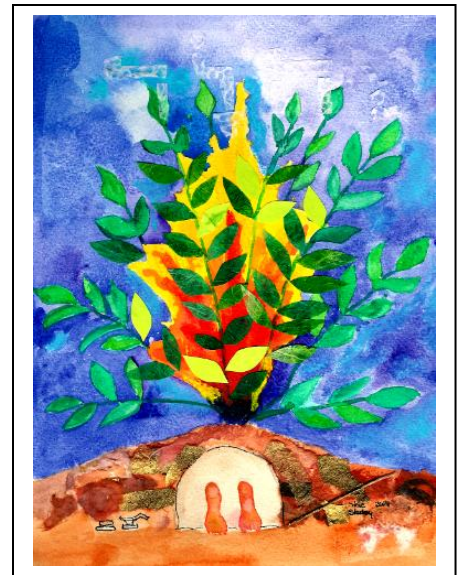
OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God,
we come before you
as a people too nearly
conformed to this
world and its values.

We fail to develop our

God-given abilities and then envy those who do. Too busy for the care of our bodies or the development of our minds and spirits, we neglect the nurture of our own best selves. We serve, but sometimes with resentment because we say "Yes" to the most insistent caller more than to you. Expecting too much of ourselves, we resent others who seem not to do their share. We waffle between weakness which allows others to walk all over us, and defensiveness which ignores the rights of others. We spend our money on that which is not bread and turn our eyes away from images of those who have no bread. Yet we ignore our own hunger and thirst for you and your righteousness. Transform us by your spirit and renew our minds. May we find the joy and peace that comes from seeking your will, through Jesus, your faithful servant. Amen

Ruth C. Duck, Touch Holiness, adapted



Moses and the Burning Bush, Watercolor on Paper, Steve Stuckey

Scripture Reading- Read Exodus 3-4 three times. Read it first for Moses. Put yourself in his sandals. Imagine the mission he was called to and his relationship to God. Second, read it for yourself. What in the passage speaks to you? Third, read it for someone else on your campus. Try reading it once in another version.

Reading for Reflection

God knows just what each person needs. He had Abraham take a walk, Elijah take a nap, Joshua take a lap, and Adam take the rap. He gave Moses a forty-year time out, he gave David a harp and a dance, and he gave Paul a pen and a scroll. He wrestled with Jacob, argued with Job, whispered to Elijah, warned Cain and comforted Hagar. He gave Aaron an altar, Miriam a song, Gideon a fleece, Peter a name and Elisha a mantle. Jesus was stern with the rich young ruler, tender with the woman caught in adultery, patient with the disciples, blistering with the scribes, gentle with children, and gracious with the thief on the cross. God never grows two people the same way. God is a hand-crafter, not a mass-producer.

From the Me I Want to Be, by John Ortberg, page 49

God is present to us but we are no longer present to God because we are no longer contemplative. We have atrophied contemplative muscles. Our contemplative facility, like a limb that has been immobilized in a cast for a long time and is now healed and healthy but unable to function without rehabilitation, needs exercise and therapy. Or, to vary the metaphor, like a weightlifter who has overdeveloped certain muscles to the detriment of others and has in this way distorted his natural body, we, in Western culture, have over-focused on one part of our consciousness, and neglected another to the point where our natural consciousness, like the weightlifter's body is distorted. Our contemplative muscles have been underused and have, as a consequence, atrophied. They need exercise.

Ronald Rolheiser in The Shattered Lantern, page 65

Prayer, at best, is a conversation of lovers, and when either side starts only talking *to* and quits talking *with* all real conversation is over. But the conversation is the point. Those who only talk to God to talk him into things have generally made God their lackey who is constantly subject to their feelings of need and want. Those who seek him for the joy of being in his presence have been motivated by a passion for his presence. When this becomes the hallmark of our devotion, then our lives are spent as a kind of rehearsal for heaven.

Calvin Miller in The Path of Celtic Prayer, page 161

God's answer to Moses, "*I am who I am*," might be paraphrased as: "I am the one who cannot be captured in thought, imagination, or feeling; the one who can never be controlled or manipulated; but who, despite this and because of it, is ever graciously and powerfully present to you. *Trust that presence, walk in it, undergo it.*"

Ronald Rolheiser in The Shattered Lantern, page 133

The spiritual life will be decisive for the way we behave as to our personal, social and national obligations. It will decide the papers we read, the movements we support, the kinds of administrators we vote for, our attitudes to social and international justice...Therefore the prevalent notion that spirituality and politics have nothing to do with one another is the exact opposite of the truth. Once it is accepted in a realistic sense, the spiritual life has everything to do with politics. It means that certain convictions about God and the world become the moral and spiritual imperatives of our life; and this must be decisive for the way we choose to behave about that bit of the world over which we have been given a limited control.

Evelyn Underhill in the Spiritual Life, page 80-81

Progress in the spiritual life commences when a person abandons a life build on mindless extroversion or on blind obedience to instincts and unconscious mind-sets. Instead the seeker after God begins to take notice of the promptings of conscience and the first stirrings of spiritual desire...A certain amount of drama is necessary to help us make the transition from a comfortable, easygoing, and relatively mindless existence to a careful, industrious, zealous, and even fervent life.

Michael Casey in Living in the Truth, page 71

Benediction

Take Lord and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. All is yours. Dispose of it wholly according to your will. Give me only your love and grace. That is enough for me.

Ignatius of Loyola

Reflective Questions for Exodus 3-4

1. When the story begins in chapter 3, Moses is 80 years old. What events of his life shaped his development up to this point?
2. A burning bush that is not consumed strikes Moses as a strange and curious site? What does this image tell you of who God might be like? Reflect upon the role of curiosity in your life with God.
3. *“Take off your sandals for you are on holy ground.”* What does this mean for Moses and how might it apply to your own life with God?
4. *“I am the God of your fathers.”* What might this mean for Moses, a man who never really knew a father?
5. *“Go, I am sending you to Pharaoh?”* God has a rescue plan for his people in Egypt. Describe the elements of the plan. How is the plan similar to the one Jesus pursues in the New Testament?
6. *“Who am I to go to Pharaoh?”* This is the first of a series of questions Moses has for the Lord. Review these, give them a title. Which of these timeless questions are also yours?
7. *“What is your name?”* Discuss what God’s name says about him?
8. *“What if they do not believe me?”* How does the Lord give Moses the credibility he needs for the audience he must face? What gives you credibility with the students you serve?
9. *“O Lord, I have never been eloquent?”* When and why do you feel incompetent? What might the Lord say to you?
10. *“O Lord, please send someone else?”* What issues of obedience do you face in your walk with Jesus?
11. *“I wish you well.”* Who blesses you? Who do you bless?