

St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church
Formation in Faith Lectionary
2017

October 15

The Call to Moses

Exodus 3:1-15

God had promised Abraham and Sarah that they would be the founders of a great nation, and indeed their children and grandchildren later became the twelve tribes of Israel. But things did not always go well in the following generations, as drought and famine drove them into Egypt. By the time of Moses, the people of Israel had become slaves under Egyptian rule. Yet God never forgets his covenant promise. Out in the desert, God calls on Moses and renews his remarkable promise.

Questions for Discussion:

Abraham met God in the form of three visitors. Moses hears God speaking through the miracle of the burning bush. God often speaks to us in different ways. What are some of the ways you feel God has spoken to you? How did you respond to God's call?

God tells Moses to remove his sandals, because he is standing on "holy ground." Are there places in your life that you have felt were holy ground? How did you show respect for that place? Is church one of those places? What does our behavior in church say about how we feel about it?

God tells Moses that he has heard the cries of the people of Israel in Egypt, that he is with them, and that he will bring them to freedom. Have there been hard times in your life when you have cried out to God? Do you think God heard you? What do you think Moses thought about hearing this?

At first, Moses is afraid, hiding his face from God and asking, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" Why do you think Moses was afraid?

God gives himself two names in this passage, first as "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," and then simply as "I am." What do you think is the significance of these names? How do they describe God?

October 22

Freedom for Israel

Exodus 14:10-31

God fulfills the promise made to Moses, convincing Pharaoh to set the people of Israel free. But as they are about to leave the borders of Egypt, Pharaoh changes his mind and tries to recapture them. At the Red Sea, God brings his people to safety once and for all, through the waters from slavery to freedom.

Questions for Discussion:

As Pharaoh's army approaches, the Israelites complain to Moses that God has led them out into the desert to die. They even say they would rather be slaves in Egypt than to die in the wilderness. Why do you think they were afraid? After everything God had done, why did they not trust in God? What in our lives are we afraid about? What holds us back from believing in God's promise?

In spite of all of their complaints, God still saves the Israelites at the Red Sea, dividing the sea so they can cross on dry land. Why do you think God didn't abandon them there? What does it say about God that he doesn't?

Exodus tells us that God hardened the hearts of the Egyptians so that they would follow the Israelites into the sea and be drowned there. This part of the story can be hard for us to read, even though it demonstrates that God is more powerful than armies or pharaohs, and that nothing can stand in the way of God's promise. What stands between us and God? Can we trust that God will break through?

The Israelites pass through the waters of the Red Sea to freedom. We read this story every year at the Easter Vigil. Why do you think we use this as an Easter story? This story comes before we renew our own baptismal vows at the Vigil. Do you see any connection between this story and Holy Baptism?

October 29

Covenant and Law

Exodus 19:1-8; 20:1-17

At Mount Sinai, God renews the covenant with Israel and gives them a new way to walk in covenant relationship. The Ten Commandments are the foundation of what will become a new system of law for the people. Remembering all that God has done for them, Moses and the Israelites make a promise to obey God and to keep his commandments.

Questions for Discussion:

At the Red Sea, the Israelites had forgotten God's faithfulness and complained that they should go back to Egypt. At Mount Sinai, it is made clear that remembering God's past actions of deliverance are to be the cornerstone of Israel's life as a covenant people. Where have you seen God at work in your life? What times can you remember that you are thankful to God for?

God calls upon Israel to be a "priestly kingdom and a holy nation." What do you think this means? What do priests do? Do priests do what they do for themselves, or on behalf of others? Many of these commandments were revolutionary in an ancient world filled with idolatry and violence. What does Israel's role mean for the rest of the world?

Look at the Ten Commandments and think about each one. Do these seem like good rules for life? Do they seem like common sense? Which ones are easy to keep? Which ones are hard? Do you try to follow them?

The Israelites answer God: "Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do." Why do you think they agree to what God has asked them to do? God is always faithful to Israel and to the covenant made with them. Do you think it will be easy for them to keep their promise? What happens when we cannot keep our promise to God?