

Bible Study for Wednesday 14th October 2020

Preparation

In our Bible Study this week we will be reading the following lectionary readings set for Sunday (18th October):

- **Exodus 33:12-23**
- **Psalm 99**
- **1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**
- **Matthew 22:15-22**

When exploring this week's readings try following this pattern:

Pray a simple prayer first or remind yourself of the words of Psalm 99:2-3 "The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is he!"

Read one of the readings

Pause

Reflect on the reading

Ask yourself

- What does this reading say about asking questions of God?
- How does the reading talk to me about God's holiness?
- How does this reading challenge me?

If anything particular strikes you in the reading, try returning to it and reflecting again on that part of the reading.

After your reflection, you may wish to move on to another reading, but you don't have to look at them all.

When you have finished your reflections for the day, pray the final prayer:

Final Prayer: Holy God, you love all that you have made, we adore you. **Amen.**

If you want to read a short reflection please see next page.

Reflection

Moses asks questions of God – he wants to know more about God’s identity and here he is asking for what seems to be an un-askable gift: to see God face to face. It is an audacious request: no one at this point has ever seen God face to face and lived.

Moses’ unusual relationship with the God of Israel begins at the burning bush. Elsewhere in the Bible it says that Moses does see God face to face, but not here. Here Moses has to tuck himself in a crevice of the rock and make do with seeing God’s hind-parts as the Holy One passes by.

This reading, like the psalm, reminds me of God’s utter holiness. God is not like human beings – we can be close to God, and reflect God’s glory, but we are not, by our nature, holy – and God is.

In the story from Matthew, Jesus is faced with a question of who taxes should be paid to. Jesus is not afraid of questions even though they are aimed at his entrapment. It is not wrong to ask questions of God. Even if the questions seem audacious, like that of Moses or even if the questions seem like they are just trying to trip Jesus up, like those of the Pharisees in Matthew 22.

In each case an answer is forthcoming. In the case of Moses the ultimate answer is a, “yes” from God, I will meet you face to face, but at this point the answer is only a partial “yes”. It strikes me that we are often not ready for the full glory of God. God’s holiness is like a fire or a bright light that can burn or blind us if we are not ready for it. Perhaps it is a bit like coming out of a cave, into bright sunlight, it takes time for our eyes to adjust. We may not be ready for the fullness of God’s glory, even if we desire it.

In the case of the Pharisees asking Jesus about tax, when they ask him a question to trap him, he gives an answer to free them. Give to Rome what Rome is due – using the coins of Rome – but give to God what is due to God. Interestingly Jesus at another point gets angry with the money changers who change the roman coins in the temple for temple treasury coins. Such coins do not have the emperor’s face on.. but they are still coins and bear an image – and it is not the image of the invisible God. Jesus sees beyond money (taxes) to see that what is due to God is not of the same kind of order at all. There is no image of God in the shape of a coin. God cannot be bought or sold or used in that way. That is the way of the slavery of Egypt.

God’s image is in us! It’s stated plainly in Genesis, so what has value for God is not coins, but our hearts and our lives. These can be used to God’s glory and as such they can become holy too.