

Exodus 24:12-18
Psalm 99
2 Peter 1:16-21
MATTHEW 17:1-9

International Sunday – February 3, 2008

We come to this place seeking God to make us whole – to lift our spirits, to refresh us, to heal us, but what if I told you God has help on this earth? What if I went further to tell you that it is the person next to you? The person in church, the person next to you on your job, in the supermarket, on the elevator, in school, on the corner, the addict, the homeless – we are not always privileged to know what God is doing in another person’s life and how God will use that person to create wholeness in our lives.

Whatever God has called you to do and given you the gifting to do so – it is not just for you – some is – but most is for the health of the whole of humanity. Ironically part of your wholeness is in the hands of someone else– that is why we must recognize our responsibility as Christians to the health and healing of humanity – and recognize that we are called to faithfully and continually put forth God-centered action-responses to the needs of those around us. God made us relational; we need each other to experience wholeness.

As we go forth this morning, as we reflect on the call of God to climb a little higher, as we look at the gifts God has given us and the urging God has put in our hearts, let us ask how that transcends our personal space and personal purpose and personal growth and lends to the wholeness of humanity and the Christian body; not everybody is a Christian, but God did not call us into the care of those that are just like ourselves, but to the compassion and care of all.

Part of our text this morning is Exodus 24:12:

“The Lord said to Moses, Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” May I interject: for their health – for their wellbeing – for their wholeness. God called Moses to draw closer. God wanted to use Moses for the wellbeing of others. God gives so that it can be given. God loves us so that we can love another, even when it is hard. Moses’ entire journey was about the wellbeing of others. God used Moses to bring people from captivity to a place of freedom. Is God calling/urging you to partner with God to bring about wellbeing in/for others? *The God-given capacities that we each have lend to sustaining the wholeness of others.*

Now God called Moses to come up the mountain and said, “Wait there.” It reminded me of a grandparent calling, or a senior person calling, saying, “come over here, I want to talk to you.” Everything inside of me says, “this is going to take awhile –

I know it is going to be good-growing stuff – encouraging stuff – a bit of correcting stuff – some how-to’s and ought-not’s.” What I am saying is that when God tugs at your heart, when God calls you higher, prepare to linger; anticipate some long sit-down, slow-down, meditating time.

That grandparent or senior person is not going to release you with that instruction without making sure you are clear about what to do. God is the master of holding us until we have ‘gotten’ the intended thing. God did not say to Moses, “wait there for forty-days and forty nights”; that just happens to have been how long it took. *God’s calling for us often catches us by surprise and requires an immediate adjustment in our time. Sometimes we perceive it to be inconvenient, but God’s plan and timing never seem to line up with the plan and timing we have in mind– where would the growth be in that – where would the faith walk be in that.*

Some of us say, like me “Why Me?” If we went back a little in the verses we would see that others started climbing up the mountain with Moses, but they settled at various positions on the mountain. They were on the mountain, they were in God’s community as God’s working people, but perhaps it was not their season – or they could have said no. It says in verse 11 that God did not lay His hand on the chief men of Israel – God did not lay hands on your other board members – God did not lay hands on the people on your job, or in your classrooms – God needed Moses for a special assignment – God may be calling you to come up higher in this season, but *in order to receive instruction you must accept the invitation to come-up (leave that comfort zone, be different, be accountable, accept responsibility, be faithful) and to linger in the presence of God.* If we linger, calendars might get rearranged to make time for prayer, fasting, studying, a prioritizing of our affairs and agendas might occur, so we can be available not only for the assignment but the time of preparation. You must love the folks – must – that come to the event/assignment and you can clearly see they have not taken the necessary amount of time to prepare but just want to throw anything at you: Teacher, Supervisor, Preacher.

Verse 17 – “Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.” In the sight of God’s people it looked like Moses was being devoured. *What God does with you for God’s people, will appear to others as dangerous, wrong, crazy, too much, scary, way out there, unnecessary.* Those emotions of others serve Satan well to discourage you. Not necessarily on purpose, but Satan will use emotions to trigger doubt, bringing the assigned and the assignment to a halt. That is why it is so important that when we feel the hand of God calling us higher, we immediately must arm ourselves with the Word of God, preparing to fend off discouragement.

When Moses got the call to come a little higher he knew it was God calling him. Moses recognized the voice of God because Moses spent regular time seeking God. Another hint: Satan is not going to call us into anything that will benefit anybody, but self. Moses knew what to do. He left the chief men on the mountain, he left his faithful assistant on the mountain – to go and spend time with God and see what God had in store. Sometimes we need to be alone with God in prayer and meditation – we may not be able to share everything with everybody when we want to – we must spend that time girding ourselves up because when the glorious work God is doing seemingly becomes

visible to others – fellow leaders, faithful friends, family, classmates, peers – our assignment and instructions may look devouring and their emotions and feedback are used to discourage us in hopes we will lose heart.

We very well may get discouraged along the way, but God would not call us to come up without equipping us with the right tools. One of those tools is to be able to encourage ourselves. A lot of times we are going to need to encourage ourselves – as Christians we are not always watching. The Word of God says, “watch and pray” – if it looks like something is going on in another’s life we should respond with love –our words and actions are how we sustain each other. Praise God that God is always watching – “be of good courage, for I am with you to the end – I will not leave and forsake you” – in that is a multitude of rescuing.

St. Barnabas to other Episcopal churches looks like a devouring fire – all this working diversity creating this welcoming community. Be of good courage.

Christians that speak against racism look like a devouring fire. Be of good courage.

Christians that embrace as ministry the struggle against addiction in all degrees look like a devouring fire.

Christian youth that stand-up in school and say, “not everyone is doing that” look like a devouring fire.

The Good News is that no matter what it looks like to others, the devouring fire is the glory of God working in us and through us – to create wholeness within ourselves, our families, our communities, our churches, our schools, our jobs, within hurting people – in this world.

The Lord said to Moses, the Lord says to St. Barnabas, the Lord says to all of us, “Come up to me on the Mountain and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments, which I have written, for their instruction.”

Martisha Dwyer

St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
Monmouth Junction, NJ