

Have you ever had God speak to you out of a burning bush? Have you ever had God speak to you out of a burning log in a campfire? What if God is trying to get our attention...but we often fail to look...to see what is on the periphery...to turn aside as Moses did. Perhaps God is not right in front of us. Where are the places from which God calls you?

*Let us be in prayer: God of the inbreath and the outbreath, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts together, be acceptable to you, our rock and our redeemer. Amen*

Another amazing story from our scriptures...Moses was just tending the flock of sheep for his father-in-law, Jethro. He had led the flock *beyond* the wilderness...even further than the wilderness to the mountain of God. It was there a bush appeared to be in flames and yet was not burning up.

Moses "turned aside" to see this thing. When God saw that he was paying attention to the edges, the liminal places....it was there that God called to him.

He told Moses to take off his sandals...he was on Holy Ground. Even out there, beyond the wilderness, it was a 'holy place'. In other religions, people still take off their shoes as they enter a sanctuary...Buddhists, Muslims. Perhaps we have forgotten the importance of this ritual, or perhaps in New England practicality, we know that the floor is cold! But taking off one's shoes is a very personal act and it makes you a little bit vulnerable, perhaps it is a humble way to enter a holy place.

Then the voice of God reminded Moses of his ancestors..."I am the God of all these people of your faith story for generations," the voice said. And God had observed the suffering of the people in Egypt, and heard their cries. J Gerald Janzen writes that God heard but was "hidden within their suffering." God...hidden *within* suffering.

Just because the rains have stopped in Texas, does not mean the people there are not suffering. Listen to these words from the NYTimes this morning: *With no preparation and few road maps to guide them, tens of thousands of hurricane survivors... are now stumbling through their first bewildering days after Harvey.... now they are consumed with worry about their children's futures, precarious family finances and what remains of the homes they fled. They need to find their way out of shelters and relatives' extra bedrooms. Find new schools for their children. Find hotel rooms when everything is booked, find rental cars when everything is taken and find the time to gut*

*their homes, call contractors and hack through layers of bureaucracy, all while bills pile up and bosses call them back to work.*

You know that many are praying...and many may wonder where God is...In our Moses story, we see how God intercedes through human beings. God reached out to *Moses* to be the one to lead the Israelites out from under Pharaohs' rule.

And still we can identify with the humanity of Moses when he asks, "But who am I to do this great thing? And to God he asks, "Who are YOU!?" And God answers...*I am, who I am.* Rabbi Andrea says that within God's name includes the words *breath and existence*...the essence of all life....I Am.

We are part of something big here...we are not separate entities but connected in a great flow of living energy expressed in incredibly diverse ways and all interdependent on one another.... Perhaps this is the answer to "who am I and who are You?" The I AM of God surrounds us all!

Now here is a story by a Native American woman that parallels the Moses story...listen to it with the story of Moses in your mind and see if you hear the connections. This is by Denise Linn...from her book, *Kindling the Native Spirit*.

*Sometimes I think I can hear the ancient ones whispering... These whispers come to me at points of intersection in my life; they call me to the wisdom of the natural realm. They remind me that every decision has consequences and to be mindful of the journey. When I take the time to be still and listen... The native spirit surfaces in many forms.*

*I felt its arrival early one misty morning, as I stood alone at the edge of an isolated mountain lake in the Cascade Mountains. Mists shrouded the water; everything was still. Not a bird or an insect—nothing—not even the subtle sound of water lapping at the shore. Total stillness. It felt like the world had inhaled, and now it was waiting. Waiting for the next breath? Waiting for something big to happen? I didn't know. I felt like I'd also inhaled, and I was also waiting. But for what?*

*Then the world around me seemed to exhale, the song of birds pierced through the mists. I could hear the lapping of the water at the shore. Remarkably, the rising mists seemed to be shifting into strange shapes. When I refocused my eyes, I "saw" thousands of luminous beings ....*

*Without knowing how, I knew these were my ancestors. It was not just my Native American ancestors . . . it was all of my ancestors. I could see them to the farthest end of the lake and beyond.. I had the feeling of a powerful community standing together who were saying, "You're a young sprout on a very old root. We're here for you. Remember, you're not alone." Then, just as the mists evaporated, so too their diaphanous forms dissolved into the sunlight.*

God reminded Moses of his connection to his ancestors...he was "a young sprout on an old root" and a Divine Wisdom was calling him to act and to know that he was not alone. He was given "a larger purpose" as Brueggemann describes.

And so....we might ask ourselves, as individuals and as a church....are we fulfilling a larger purpose? Perhaps we are doing it already by just "being church" in the many ways that we do this? Or are we waiting for this to happen...something to break open for us in a larger way?

One thing for sure is that we are called to love...mightily. Love one another, our families, our neighbors, our world, our earth and all of creation... God hidden in the suffering...calls us to love unconditionally and out of that love, comes the call to make changes.

Amen.