

The Urgency to Discover

September 3, 2023 at First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC

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Texts: Exodus 3: 1-15

Would you please pray with me: God I come here today with the desire to be a vessel of your love, a carrier of light and I pray that you may bless the words that come out of my mouth and the meditations of my soul be pleasing to you the God who is and will be. In your name I pray amen.

First Church it is so refreshing and honoring to be back among all of you. As we face transitions and pre-ensembles of what a new season might bring, there is no place I would rather be than here. I have been blessed with the opportunity to go back home and spend time with my family celebrating my engagement. It was an unexpected gift that showed me God's care and listening to the desires of my heart. As we said goodbye to Lexi last Sunday I was grateful to join online and surround her with love and shed my couple of tears across the screen. It reminded me of the beauty that there is in having a community that showers you in love and support and as Rev. Dan expressed last Sunday I was able to embrace the dynamite of God!

And it is with that spirit of gratefulness and nostalgia that I want to approach this generational text this morning. The reason I wanted to stay with this text instead of jumping right into the gospel reading for today was because I felt inclined to dwell into the ancestry of Moses and Exodus a bit more. Now I know this is a text that has been passed through generations of faith and families. I wanted to acknowledge that there are so many theological and historical pieces that are present in this text. Starting from the aspect of Exodus being a book of deliverance and has been a generational text for those in time of suffering and guidance into their own liberations either as an individual or as a collective. There is also the Growth and oppression of Israel in Egypt where as a result, we have infanticide and Moses being a survivor of that he grows on

the other side of the river as a privileged adopted Egyptian. Which leads us to our verses for this morning where an elderly Moses who is now an outlaw is called once again to turn aside.

I have covered in a couple of phrases the scope of these first chapters of Exodus yet it seems so familiar to the way that I have heard my grandparents and parents tell their oral histories about our lineage as a family. And that is one of the aspects from these chapters of Exodus that I want to dwell in this morning. I want us to look back and into the generational stories that we carry as a community of faith and our ability to turn aside and go deeper into its roots.

I believe Exodus and Scripture itself are key reminders of God's closeness to us and its ability to transcend time and space when it comes to generations. Texts that remind us of how every moment in our life has happened because something that seems so majestic happened to our ancestors for us to be here today. In this time where we are one Sunday before our official regathering we have Exodus 3:

1-15 where there it is- a bush up in flames but does not turn into ashes amidst a regular day and routine of leading a flock out wilderness. Moses was going throughout his day. He was under the same pressure and oppression as the rest of Israel. Until...finally...something majestic and magical happened.

3 Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bushes not burned up." 4

Isn't this story so vibrant and I will say it a lot this Sunday, but it is truly magical. And when I say magical it is not in a sense as not real but magical in a sense of admiration of its greatness and wholeness.

Which leads me to the first thing that came to mind after being home and being able to listen to my grandfather tell the story of how his dad was a German refugee in Honduras and then there he met my great grandmother who was an indigenous woman and hence started their interracial love that then, generations

later led to the birth of this mestiza that is standing here today!

It reminded me of one of my all-time favorite books and representations of the magical realism present in our lives. The moments that seem so unique and wrapped in details that transcend the way we get to experience our raw realities. Yet, they are as true and vivid as ever.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *100 Years of Solitude* speaks to the magic that is found in everyday life and in generational storytelling.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez uses a lot of nostalgia in this book and he continuously goes back to his childhood and his ancestors while at the same time transcending this linear chronos of time and making it seem like it is all connected throughout generations. He reminds us that we need to remember the greatness of the events that took place in order for us to be living and breathing today. Because in places like Latin America and I believe across the globe that hope found in the magical moments of everyday life is the daily bread that fulfills the souls of tired and overworked hearts and bodies.

Now in our verses for today, these burning bushes filled with God's presence and friendship truly makes us wake up this urgency to discover, this urgency to step out of the routines and paths that we might be tired and fatigued from and it turns us to wonder and admire the holiness of slowing down and looking outside of our routines where we might just find the liberation we have been longing for.

I may add we need these burning bushes that do not turn into ashes to remind us that we are part of this holy ground no matter how much injustice tries to seem as overwhelmingly omnipresent. There is hope found in the burning bushes of our daily lives.

To continue a bit more into the magic found in realism: A good friend of Marquez and another amazing Latin American writer Carlos Fuentes also describes the liberation needed to see the magical burning bushes in our daily life.

For Fuentes the universality of the novel stands among the lines that it has the power to announce a new world [1] where violence and uncertainty seem to be omnipotent and omnipresent. Fuentes continues to define this liberation in literature of Latin America to and he says how it (and I quote) “shrink the distance between cultural reality and political institutions, giving shape to chaos, hope to desperation, direction to ideas, and communicability to truth.”

Now Fuentes and Marquez might be talking about literature and novels when using these descriptive words. However, I could not help but connect the same feelings to this story in Exodus and Moses’ journey of turning aside to discover this burning bush.

Moses could have dismissed the fact that something truly magical and unique was happening at that time. He could have tried to gaslight himself into not believing that indeed that bush was not turning into ash. Yet-Moses was able to take that leap and feel the urgency to turn aside and look at that bush.

Beloved! May we see this story that has been so familiar to our tradition and faith be a reminder that there is liberation and majesty in the spiritual experience of seeing the burning bushes that derail our routines and comfort. I believe this story is a good reminder that God’s presence and burning signs can be able to give shape to chaos, hope to desperation, direction to ideas, and communicability to truth.

Now this is not me saying to be constantly rushing into uncomfot all the time but to point out that maybe sometimes it is worth giving into that urge to discover what that newness at the corner of our eye might be like.

Finally, I would like to bring a beautiful image that the theologian Ellen Davis mentions when thinking about this passage in Exodus and the fullness of time in which God has moved and brought heaven to earth for our deliverance. She points out the interpretation of Gregory of Nyssa in his treatise “On the Birth

of Christ.” Later on, the iconographic tradition picked it up by crafting the icon of Mary Mother of Jesus as the burning bush hangs at St. Catherine’s monastery.

If you haven’t seen this icon before I highly recommend you to check it out.

Davis highlights that and I quote, “to this image Mary, who carried God in her belly and later in her arms, did not dissolve into ash-she herself is the bush that burns perpetually, yet is not consumed.”

Again, we are caught up with images of divine deliverance and intimacy from God. Both images of the burning bush and Mary’s conception are related to the splendor beauty of God’s closeness and presence here as it is in heaven. **It is so magical yet so real.**

Verse 4 says:

When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”

And friends I am here to just remind us that we can be able to experience the real wholeness of God’s presence where he has heard our cries and prayers. Once we turn aside and give into the things that are not in our routinely structured days, God speaks to us saying “Here I am”. Although fear might be a real presence in our bodies, God is here to remind us that God has heard our cries, God has seen our grief, and our needs.

We are able to meet him in the very magical and real-life experiences from the cosmos of our kitchens, playground, office, family stories, school, community gatherings and all worthy to be called holy ground when it fills us with God’s intimacy, love, protection and deliverance. Within it all, there God is.

May we be able to find freedom in the exits we take in these different transitions of our lives. May we be able to trust the holy ground that we step on every single day. Let us remind ourselves that we carry God within us, the great I AM who transcends time and place yet comes down to meet us right where we are. May

the burning bushes that seem magical and surreal in our lives become palpable holy ground that shrinks that distance we might feel between God and us, between us and others.

Beloved, turn aside if needed and when needed— do not deny that there can be wholeness within you and around you. May we be able to seek out the liberation our hearts and communities desire. Here we have a text that has been present throughout generations.

Amen!

