

Let me start with an apology today: In the interest of preaching a sermon I have done something unforgivable: I have reduced 300 pages of the history book to half a page ...I do think it will find your approval; who wants to sit through a 300 page sermon?

The exodus lesson we heard as first of today's lessons is a rather important one. It is the story about the calling of Moses to be one of the greatest figures in the History of the Israelites and it is also the story of God and how this God reveals (him) or itself.

The story of Israel started a few centuries earlier with the calling of Abram from Ur in Chaldea. God selected Abram to become the founding father of a great nation and gave him a new name: Abraham!

Abraham, his son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob, became known as the fathers, The ancestors of the people of Israel.

During Jacob's time a great famine occurred which eventually led to the peaceful settling of the tribe in Egypt.

Years, decades, centuries had past and the initial peaceful coexistence with the people of Egypt had turned into a master and slave relationship.

The Egyptians being the superior race and the Israelites the slaves. As a measure of population control the superior race started to kill excess male baby's. The story goes that baby Moses through the actions of God survived. He even was raised in the household of the Egyptian King.

Upon finding out who he was .. he killed in anger an Egyptian guard and was forced to flee. He found exile with the priest of Midian who eventually became his father in law.

And this is where today's story starts. Moses – the murderer in exile - is keeping the flock of his father in law in the area of Mount Horeb: the mountain of God.

The first striking thing in this story is that Moses like all the others after him who meet God a bit closer react in a similar way: Moses hides his face and is afraid to look at God. Hiding and being afraid seems to be a very common reaction in a closer encounter with God. The Bible is full of those stories.

The second striking thing for me is that God chooses Moses – the Murderer in exile – to lead the Israelites out of Slavery in Egypt. So God asks – maybe tells is a better word here – Moses to go back to the place of his greatest fear, back to a place where they just wait to get their hands on Moses. So no wonder Moses raises a few objections: Hey lord .. wait a minute .. who am I that I should and could do something like that?? In this day and

age I could see Moses say something like: Are you crazy asking/telling me something like that?

God's reply is a bit short here: I will be with you! But apparently this is enough for Moses for the moment ... but you can see Moses thinking ... and who are you!?

And now we hear God actually giving an answer: I am who I am .. or something translated to: I was the same and will be the same... or the same I was I will always be. – the theologians are still struggling with the translations. God does add that he is the God of the ancestors, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

What is missing in the story .. and is left to our imagination ..is what it means for a human to have a close encounter with God.

What we know from the continuation of Moses story is that he succeeded in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt into the promised land. But that is another 300 page story of what all happened on that journey!

So apparently God's presence was enough for Moses that he would face his greatest fears and succeed in working through them.

But the most fascinating thing for me in the lesson is what God says and reveals about who and what God is:

“ I have observed the misery of my people”, “I have heard their cry”, “I know their suffering ... I have come to deliver them ...I will bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey ..I have seen their oppression....their cry has come to me .. I will bring them out of Egypt ...”! ..out of slavery!

Out of their oppression ...!!!

What we can conclude from those sentences is remarkable. God had enough! God is putting an end to the misery of his people! God takes action and nothing will stand in its way as we hear later in the story.

What that means for us is an assurance that God listens, God hears our crying, God will set us free from oppression, whatever form it might have taken in our life's: abusive relationships; abusive work environment; addictions; personal trauma and pain .. etc...whatever we suffer from.

God will listen and will bring us to a better place! We are his people!

We might have to face like Moses our darkest fears ...but we also can know and experience that when God calls us ... God will be with us! .. and see us through to a better place!