

FIRST READING

This is what you must say to the children of Israel:
I AM has sent me to you.

A reading from the book of Exodus

3:1-8a, 13-15

One day Moses was taking care of the sheep of Jethro his father-in-law,
who was the priest of Midian.
Moses led the sheep along the edge of the desert to Sinai,
the mountain of God.
Suddenly the Lord's angel appeared to him from a burning bush.
Moses saw that bush was on fire,
but it was not burning up.
He said to himself, "This is strange!
I'll go over and see why the bush is not burning up."

When the Lord saw Moses coming near the bush,
he called out to him.

Moses answered, "Lord, here I am."

God replied, "Don't come any closer.
Take off your sandals,
because the ground where you are standing is holy.
I am the God who was worshiped by your ancestors,
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Moses was too afraid to look at God, and he hid his face.

The Lord said, "I have seen how my people are suffering in Egypt,
and I have heard them cry out to me because of those slave bosses.
I am sorry for them,
and so I have come down to rescue them
from the power of the Egyptians.
I will bring my people out of Egypt
into a country where there is good land
and plenty of milk and honey."

Moses answered, "I will tell the people of Israel
that the God of their ancestors has sent me to them.
But what should I say, if they ask me who you are?"

God said to Moses, "I am who I am.
so tell them that the one whose name is 'I Am' has sent you.
Say that the God of their ancestors,
the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
has sent you to them.
This is my name forever,
and it is the name that people must use from now on."

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

103:1-2, 6-7, 8 and 11

R. (8a) The Lord is kind and merciful.

With all my heart
I praise the Lord,
and with all that I am
I praise his holy name!
With all my heart
I praise the Lord!
I will never forget
how kind he has been.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful.

For all who are mistreated,
the Lord brings justice.
He taught his Law to Moses
and showed all Israel
what he could do.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful.

The Lord is merciful!
He is kind and patient,
and his love never fails.
How great is God's love for all
who worship him?
Greater than the distance
between heaven and earth!

R. The Lord is kind and merciful.

VERSE BEFORE THE GOSPEL

Matthew 4:17

R. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Repent, says the Lord;
the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

R. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL

Leave the tree for another year and I will try to help it grow.

† A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke 13:6-9

Jesus told the people this story:

“A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard.
One day he went out to pick some figs,
but he didn't find any.
So he said to the gardener,
'For three years I have come looking for figs on this tree,
and I haven't found any yet.
Chop it down!
Why should it take up space?

“The gardener answered,
'Master, leave it for another year.
I'll dig around it and put some manure on it to make it grow.
Maybe it will have figs on it next year.
If it doesn't, you can have it cut down.' ”

The Gospel of the Lord.



Third Sunday of Lent Cycle C

Prayer:

Dear God,
when we feel discouraged,
help us remember that you are always close by.
Because you live in us and love us,
may we believe in our goodness
And see ways that we can be good for others.
In Jesus name we pray, **AMEN.**

First Reading: Exodus 3: 1-15 (*Please see the text below. It includes the passages in which Moses hesitates and God reassures. These two verses are omitted in the lectionary.*)

Gospel: Luke 13:6-9

Activity

- Proclaim the reading from Exodus. (*if you are pressed for time read only the Gospel*)
- Tell the children that they will be dramatizing the Gospel today. Ask them to listen to the reading and consider which role they want to play: the vineyard owner, the gardener or the fig tree.
- Proclaim the Gospel passage.
- Ask the children who want to be the fig tree to stand up and show the others how they think a tree would look if it has not produced any fruit for three years. If they need coaching perhaps you and the other children could coach them. Suggest a scowling face, tightly folded arms or hands stuffed in pockets.
- Next, ask the children who want to be the vineyard owner to stand and show how they would convey the owner's feeling as you read verses 6 and 7. Tell them they may not speak; they may only use gestures Perhaps they could do their actions in relation to a fig tree that is still standing.
- Next, invite the "gardeners" to act out their part as you read verses 8 and 9. Remind them that they may not speak but only use gestures to convey the message that you will be reading. Pick the three children to act out the roles of the owner, gardener and tree as they hear the Gospel being read again.
- Finally, choose one owner, one tree and one gardener and ask them to act out what you are reading from the Gospel.

Discussion

When Jesus told this story, which character do you think reminded him of God? (*Some may say the vineyard owner because the owner is "in charge."*) Let's hope most say the gardener. Ask them why the gardener reminds them of God. (*God wants to help us grow and be the best person we can be. God doesn't give up on people.*)

If you have used the reading from Exodus, this would be a good time to make the connection between the readings. In both God is portrayed as the one who notices people

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in trouble and who encourages them. *(this is why it's important to include the verses that the lectionary omits)* When Moses tries to say that God has the wrong person to help the people ("Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?"), God reassures Moses by saying, "I'll be with you."

So, if our Gardener God is looking out for us and helping us, what kind of trees will we look like? *(Perhaps put on some lively music, get all of them on their feet and invite them to follow your lead as they sway back and forth on their feet, wave their arms and even clap their hands.)*

AMEN !

Reading from the Book of Exodus (3:1-15)

**One day Moses was taking care of the sheep of Jethro his father-in-law.
Moses led the sheep along the edge of the desert to Sinai,
the mountain of God.**

**Suddenly the Lord's angel appeared to him from a burning bush.
Moses saw that the bush was on fire, but was not burning up.
He said to himself, "This is strange!
I'll go over and see why the bush is not burning up."**

When God saw Moses coming near the bush, God called out to him.

Moses answered, "Lord, here I am."

**God replied, "Don't come any closer. Take off your sandals,
because the ground where you are standing is holy.
I am the God who was worshiped by your ancestors,
Abraham (and Sara), Isaac (and Rebecca), Jacob (and Rachel)."**

Moses was too afraid to look at God, and he hid his face.

**The Lord said, "I have seen how my people are suffering in Egypt,
and I have heard them cry out to me because of those slave bosses.
I am sorry for them, so I have come down to rescue them
from the power of the Egyptians.
I will bring my people out of Egypt into a country where there is good land
and plenty of milk and honey."**

"Come now!" God said to Moses.

"I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God,

"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and lead your people out of Egypt?"

God answered, "I will be with you."

**"But," Moses said to God, "When I go to the Israelites and say to them,
'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,'
if they ask me, 'What is God's name?' what am I to tell them?"**

God said, "I AM-the-one-who-is-always-with-you. Tell them 'I AM sent me to you.'"

THE WORD OF GOD.