

In the Cleft: Seeking God's Presence in the Wild

Text: Exodus 33:12-23

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The scripture for today is from Exodus 33:12-23. I invite you to enter into and receive these meditations on the scripture. May you encounter something of God's goodness here.

Exodus 33:12-13 Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name...' Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways...."

The poet Jan Richardson writes, "I want to believe / [this blessing] will always / find its way to us / when we are in the place / made by cleaving— / the space left / by what is torn apart"

In this time when the whole world is joined together in the rupture of a global pandemic, we can perhaps relate to Moses' desires to receive a blessing, his longings to see God's face, his supplication for God to reveal the way through the wilderness. Today, let us take on Moses' longings and supplications as the very foundation of our faith, the stuff that blessings are made of. Whatever your wilderness is, whatever breakings and breakings open we are experiencing, may our prayer be this:

God, you know me by name.

Show me your ways.

Exodus 33:14-18 God said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." And Moses said to God, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here..." God said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray."

Jan Richardson continues, "I know the ache / of vision that comes / in such fragments, / the terrible wonder / of glory that arrives / but in glimpses." In these days, as we navigate pandemics of Covid, and racism, and political uncertainty, I admit that sometimes I feel like Moses in this moment. God says, "I will go with you," and Moses responds, "Why will you not go with us?" Perhaps Moses felt like many of us, that the struggle for freedom shouldn't be this long, it shouldn't be this hard to see the arc bending toward justice. But God doesn't leave Moses in that moment. God reassures him. I know you. I know you by name. And a new day rises; God's glory is revealed.

Sometimes the new day surfaces in voices like Moses demanding of this world, revelations of glory. Sometimes the new day surfaces in a God who says, "I know the ache of vision that comes in such fragments, and I will give you rest." Today, let us make a practice of both demanding God's glory from this world and of opening ourselves to the presence of God who is already tending to us. May our prayer be this:

God, you know us by name.

Show us your glory.

Exodus 33:19-23 And God said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you... But," God said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live." And God continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by..."

"I want to believe / [this blessing] will always / find its way to us [...] I want to be unafraid / to turn toward / this blessing / that unhinges us / even as it / makes us whole." Moses' struggle for freedom in the wilderness reminds us that it is precisely in times like these, when the whole world is breaking, that God's hand covers us and God's goodness passes by. When we feel the most desperate, when we cannot see the way forward, God is closer than we can even imagine, showing Godself to us, tenderly covering us with love. To be held like this, in all of the breaking; to find refuge like this, in all that is breaking open, that is God's promise to us in the wilderness. "I will put you in the cleft of a rock and cover you," is the blessing we can turn towards and offer one another. May our prayer be this:

God, you know us by name.
Cover us with your goodness.

Amen.