

[Ex. 3:1-8a, 13-15; Ps.103; 1 Cor.10: 1-6, 10-12; Lk.13: 1-9]

This is a weird grouping of readings we're invited to consider! We've got a bush that's burning and also not burning. We've got a rock that migrates all around the desert and is the Christ. And we've got a fig tree that doesn't produce figs. What are we to make of this biblical collage?

The characters in these passages are trying to do the same thing: fit the pieces together so they can see what each puzzling series of events is about.

First, there's Moses. He grew up in a palace raised by Pharaoh's daughter. But he's not an Egyptian, he's Hebrew -- a dangerous thing to be since Hebrews aren't treated so well by Egyptians. Which makes Moses mad enough to kill. Which he does, murdering an Egyptian who's beating a Hebrew slave. Now Moses is a man on the run.

Flash-forward to Moses 2.0. He's the husband of the daughter of a Midianite priest. But Moses is no Midianite. Nor is he really an Israelite, since he's never been circumcised. Moses sees a bush on fire that's not actually burning. Weird! What's even weirder is that the God of Israel is waiting for him there. God wants Moses to go back to Egypt and set the Israelites free. You've got to be kidding!

The Second reading: Paul is writing the Corinthians. They're not Jewish. Paul's not Greek. But Paul is something more than Jewish -- he's an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul tries to explain Moses to the Greeks by way of Jesus.

This leads to a very strange metaphor about Christ being the rock from which Israel drank in the desert years. And it followed them around, of course, because what good is a drinking rock if it's not there when you need it?

Then, we arrive at the Gospel. Folks are discussing current events with Jesus. Pilate just had some Galileans slain. Hardly newsworthy: Josephus says Galileans were troublemakers, and Pilate had put mobs of them to death before. Jesus is a Galilean. The people telling him these things are probably not. Jesus is in Judea. So the reporters are Judeans.

Jesus responds to them by noting that some Judeans were also killed in a tower collapse recently in Jerusalem. He equates the two events: Pilate's coldblooded killing with a random accident. The message: Don't read the will of God into either of these things. Don't try to read or control the will of God in the bad things that happen.

Moses was wondering if the whole thing about leading the Israelites to salvation was going to work. There he would be, an unknown appearing out of nowhere claiming God had sent him to lead God's -- and his -- people out of slavery. He needed some credentials. Asking God's name would do it.

One thing you might not know, is that to know someone's name was, in a sense, to have power and control over them. But God will not be controlled. So, God tells Moses "I am who am..." Moses was the first to hear this new name, which was not a proper name at all but a form of a verb: "to cause to be, to create"; "I am what I am"; or "I will be what I will be."

From this moment, the “LORD-YHWH” would mean a God who is and always will be utterly free and powerful to do great things -- like free God’s people. God is an action verb!

Moses would find his mission and return to his people -- but though he knew he was in the presence of God, he still had some reluctance -- not the last Israelite prophet to feel that way. So, if even a great figure like Moses could be out of place and struggle to find out what God was calling him to, it can happen to anyone. Come to Eucharistic Adoration with the Lord. Remove your sandals. Stand on holy ground. Come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Find YOUR holy ground.

Am I willing to acknowledge my mistakes and repent my wrongdoings? Do I show mercy on those who sin against me? Do I seek justice and show solidarity with all members of the community? Most of all, do I find joy in loving and serving God?

Do I really believe that God exists? When do I experience the greatest doubt? What brings me the most assurance?

And second, like Moses, we must consider how best to persuade others of God’s loving existence. Do I show it in my actions? Am I bearing fruit? Do I live in right relationships and cultivate a spirit of openness and hospitality?

When you feel adrift or without purpose, how do you find direction? That is YOUR burning bush, your drifting water rock, the will of God for YOU. AMEN!