

Oct. 1, 2017
Reflections on Exodus 2:23-35; 3:10-15; 4:10-17 (Moses)

★HYMN

God Says

MV 172



God says, "Be still so you may hear
the words I whisper in your ear.
If you will listen, you will know
I'm with you always where you go."

OLD TESTAMENT

Exodus 2:23-25

²³ After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of their slavery their cry for help rose up to God. ²⁴ God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵ God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

REFLECTION

Their Cry Rose Up!

The cries of the broken, wounded, and oppressed of our world still rise up to God today. We hear their voices too. We hear their voices when we turn on and tune in to the news. We hear their voices when we walk down our city streets. We hear their voices echoing in our minds as we imagine the suffering of those we hear and read about, or those we pass along the way, calling out, "I'm homeless. I'm hungry. Can you spare a little change?" Please."

I believe that God hears their voices. But, who is this God who hears, and remembers? Who is this God who takes notice? And how does God act in the world to heal and restore the broken-hearted... the broken in body... those who seemingly have lost 'everything,' except, perhaps life itself?

SUNG RESPONSE

God Says

MV 172



God says, "look up and see the prize
I've placed here right before your eyes.
Find beauty in the things of earth,
a cause for wonder and rebirth."

OLD TESTAMENT

Exodus 3:10-15

Then God said to Moses, ¹⁰ So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² God said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

¹³ But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I am who I am." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you':

This is my name forever,
and this my title for all generations.

REFLECTION

Who Am I?

A little back-story here-- When Moses left Egypt he was fleeing for his life! The Pharaoh of the time, now dead, was in pursuit of Moses to kill him. Further, just prior to that, a fellow Israelite had challenged his efforts to act as peacemaker in a dispute between him and another Israelite, asking Moses, "Who put you in charge? Are you going to kill me like you did that Egyptian?"

God is asking Moses to enter hostile territory, and to approach a Pharaoh who will likely be far from hospitable. Moses has good reason to be afraid for his life on the one hand, and on the other hand, reason to be doubtful that his own people will even follow him. There just didn't seem to be an upside to this scenario! well, except that Moses knows... deep in his bones the suffering of his people—their cry has gone up before him—and echoed in the depths of his soul. And this Voice calling him now to act on their behalf has emblazoned itself upon his mind's eye.

The great I AM WHO I AM, the God of his ancestors, has promised to be with him, and to equip him for this work of liberating his people. "Go down Moses, way down to Egypt land. Tell old Pharaoh, 'Let my people go!'"

Still Moses resists. “Who am I?” Who am I to do this thing? Please! Find someone else! Moses would prefer to shut down the voice, even as we often prefer to shut down and shut out the Voice calling our name. Moses is afraid-- believes himself unequal to the task--even as we too are often afraid, believing we are not good enough, smart enough or strong enough – and hesitant to step out and step up to that which has been set before us.

SUNG RESPONSE



**God says, “Come here! I need your voice.
Please teach my people to rejoice.
In who you are, in what you do,
your life will show my love for you.”**

OLD TESTAMENT

Exodus 4:10-17

¹⁰ But Moses said to the Lord, “O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” ¹¹ Then the Lord said to him, “Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹² Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.” ¹³ But he said, “O my Lord, please send someone else.” ¹⁴ Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, “What of your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. ¹⁶ He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him. ¹⁷ Take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.”

REFLECTION

Wow!

Yesterday, Michael and I went to the Powwow at Dufferin Grove Park held by Native Child and Family Services of Toronto.

It was a beautiful fall day, and many of our aboriginal brothers and sisters were dressed in full regalia, the men in their feathers, fringes, and masks—the women and girls in their jingle dresses and braids.

Yesterday, September 30, was Orange Shirt Day—a day to remember the painful legacy of the Residential School System for many of our Aboriginal Peoples throughout Canada. There were orange T-shirts that read: “Every Child Matters.”

I wore an orange shirt in solidarity.

When the opportunity came for all of us wearing orange to dance in honour of the 150,000 children removed from their homes between 1886 and 1996; in honour of the 3,000 children known to have died while in the system; in honour 80,000 survivors, alive today---many of them still suffering from the trauma of that experience--

I joined the circle and danced. As I danced, I prayed for those children harmed by a system in which our church, in its ignorance was complicit. As I danced, I prayed for those now in adulthood, still suffering from the trauma inflicted upon them—and for their children, and their children’s children. And I held my heart in sorrow and in lament for the harm done in our name.

Our friend Jenny Blackbird, who has graciously joined us here at Manor Road a number of times stayed at home with a cold and was unable to dance, so I danced in her name.... without her jingle dress—alas!

I cannot claim to have heard a voice calling me to risk my life on behalf of the aboriginal peoples of this nation. On this day, however, I remember that while many are healing, and growing stronger by the day... others are still broken, wounded, addicted and oppressed, and their voices cry out for healing, for wholeness, and for a way into the future. What I have heard in my heart and mind is a voice that reminds me of how Jenny Blackbird has so graciously come to be with us, to teach us, to drum for us, to dance with us; of how Rev. Evan Smith, of Toronto Urban Native Ministries, in the midst of an incredibly demanding schedule, has come to tell her story, and facilitate for us a powerful experience as some of us participated in the blanket exercise; and finally, how Sarah Midanic took precious time to come and share with us about the work of the Native Women’s Resource Centre.

We have listened and we have learned, and I hope we have increased in our understanding of what our aboriginal brothers and sisters have suffered, and continue to suffer, at the hands of the leaders and peoples of our nation. We have given money from the sale of our building to some of their causes. We have lent our

ears and engaged our hearts. For me, at least, it is now time to leave my comfortable surroundings and to go out to meet Jenny, Evan, Sarah and others in the context of their lives, to attend some of their events, to show by my presence and my willingness to listen, my solidarity with, and care for them.

In your network, you will see information about Sisters in Spirit Vigils happening this coming Wednesday in honour of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

If you would like to join me on Wednesday at The Native Women's Resource Centre for a feast, a vigil, and prayers, please let me know.

I believe that the living Christ still hears as the cries of the broken-hearted, the wounded, and oppressed of our day rise up. And I hear his response in these words imprinted in my heart: "I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly." and, "When you have done it onto the least of these my brothers and sisters, you have done it onto me."

In these words, Jesus calls us to step up and step out of the comfortable confines of our homes, community, and church in order to reach out to others and make this world a better place, in his name.

SUNG RESPONSE



**God says, "Reach out! The world's in need
and wants a word, a song, a deed.
I send you forth to speak, to sign,
to act for Christ in everything."**

Sung Response from More Voices. Words: Adapted by Stephen C. Warner, 2003, from St. Teresa of Avila; Music: Rick Gunn, 2006