

## **St Martins C3 – February 2, 2025**

### ***Walk Into the Cloud - Encounter***

#### **Sermon Notes:**

We were made to be in God's presence. His greatest desire is to be united in a relationship with His children. God wants you. He wants to know you and for you to encounter Him.

Today, we want to explore an encounter that the people of Israel had with God that scripture describes.

Israel was a nation of slaves in Egypt, but God rescued them. He sent Moses to lead them. They were rescued and redeemed and able to come before God at Mt Sinai.

#### **Read Exodus 19:16-20**

What an encounter. Israel is terrified. God then begins to tell them about who they are and what it looks like to be in a relationship with him. He speaks to them and gives them the 10 commandments.

Their encounter with God keeps on going.

#### **Read Exodus 20:18-21**

#### **Fear or Faith**

There are two kinds of fear. One is a negative fear of harm. It understands God's power and holiness but not his character. The other is a positive reverence and awe that is really faith. What Moses is saying is that you need not fear for your lives. Coming to God was a serious thing; there were some

restrictions, but Moses knew that God wanted to meet with them.

We face the same **choice** when God calls us to meet with him. Do we choose fear or faith? **Fear says** God is unapproachable. God is holy, and I am not. I am so aware of my unworthiness that I do not want to meet with God. But we are encouraged to step forward in faith.

### **Desire or Distance**

There are two attitudes towards God. All the people saw the same things, the majority of people chose to stay at a distance, but Moses knew he could come close.

Moses walked into the cloud. Israel stayed at a distance. Be like Moses, not Israel.

If you truly believe that Jesus has made a way for you to meet with this great and mighty God, then your response, and my response, will be to spend time with him. To do whatever it takes to meet with God. To step into the cloud.

### **Read Hebrews 4:14-16**

For Israel, there were many reasons they could not step forward, however, through Jesus, all of those things that separated us from him have been stripped away. Jesus made a way so that we can enter freely into God's presence. Jesus is the **new and better Moses**, who not only spoke to God on our behalf but made a way for us to speak to him, too.

So, today, will we choose fear or faith? Will we choose distance or desire?

## Questions for Connect Groups:

### Key Point

We need to be those who desire God's presence.

### Questions

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

If you were with Israel in Exodus 19-20, what would your response be?

What is your experience with authority? How does that translate to your relationship with God?

Why is it important to desire an encounter with God and an experience of His presence?

When did you most powerfully encounter God? Can you tap into that desire again?

Would your relationship with God be characterised more by duty or desire?

What does it look like for you to move from fear to faith?

What holds you back from encountering more of God's presence?

How can you "walk into the cloud" and ask God for more of His presence?

## **Monday Devotion: Israel in Captivity**

### ***Read Exodus 1:1-21***

As we are spending this current teaching series in the second half of the book of Exodus this week, we will catch up on the beginning of the story.

Joseph was a significant person in the nation of Egypt. His deliverance allowed them to prosper amongst the worst of the famine that hit the ancient world. However, after many years, the deeds of Joseph were forgotten, and the descendants of Jacob grew so numerous they became a threat. They were enslaved and put to work in miserable circumstances.

Their population was controlled, and many children were killed. Yet through it all God was present and looking after the nation of Israel. His grace restrained them from the worst of the actions of the Pharaoh.

There are times in our lives when we struggle with difficulties. Grief, anxiety and difficulty beset us on every side. We may wonder where God is during these times.

The story of the nation of Israel is that the story is not over until we see God face to face. The difficulty of our lives may just be one chapter in the story of our development. It may be one part of the redemption poem He is writing with our lives.

It is difficult when we can't see the whole story, but it is worth looking for the little moments we see God breakthrough. Today, take some time to prayerfully ask God to show you how He is bringing your life to your difficulties.

## **Tuesday Devotion: The First Encounter**

***Read Exodus 3:1-17***

The story of Moses is one of grace and favour towards the most unworthy. Moses grew up in Pharaoh's household after being saved by a mini ark. He became angry one day after seeing his people mistreated and committed murder.

This should have disqualified Moses from ever being involved in God's plan. But God is bigger than any of our mistakes. Instead of rejecting him, God chooses, and He uses Moses for His purpose.

God calls Moses from a bush that is burning and not consumed. He reveals Himself to Moses and reveals His name (I AM). He gives Moses the mission of being the one who the salvation of Israel will happen through. Moses is reluctant but obedient.

This is the first great encounter with God in the book of Exodus. It brings to mind the encounters that Abraham had with God in the book of Genesis.

God has always desired to meet with His people. To all who draw near to Him, He gives the ability for them to be changed and transformed by His love.

Each of us needs to consider whether we have the faith to reach out to God and experience His presence. But this has to come from our heart. We can't manufacture the presence of God. It is simply for us to seek Him and see how He responds.

## **Wednesday Devotion: Power Displayed**

***Read Exodus 7:1-13***

The next part of the story sees Moses meet up with Aaron and encourage the elders of Israel that God has not forgotten them. Aaron and Moses appear before Pharaoh, and he rejects their request for a three-day journey to offer sacrifices. His heart is hard to God's purposes.

He makes the conditions more difficult for the Israelites, discouraging them. At this point, Moses wants to give up, but God prevents Him from doing so. Moses and Aaron step before Pharaoh, and they show a display of God's power.

It is clear by this point that Pharaoh will not release the nation of Israel without a fight. So, God must show that He will do what is required for His people to be freed from slavery.

The first displays of this power were showy but basic. Aaron threw his staff down and it became a serpent. When the sorcerers of Pharaoh did the same Aaron's snake ate theirs.

This was just the beginning of what God had for Pharaoh. The story of the coming chapters reminds us that God's purposes will happen despite the most ardent resistance.

We need to choose to be open to God's leading rather than resist His purposes and harden our hearts. Think if there is any way you may be resisting God's leading today.

## **Thursday Devotion: The First Passover**

***Read Read Exodus 12:21-30***

Due to Pharaoh's continued hard heart, God brings more plagues against the Egyptians. While the effects of these will certainly have been felt by the people, each of these plagues hits against a god of the Egyptians.

For example, the turning of the river to blood challenged three gods. Hapi was the god of the Nile, the Nile was considered Osiris's bloodstream, and Khnum was the guardian of the Nile. None of them could stand against God and protect their most essential resource.

The final plague was the death of the firstborn, and it challenged Pharaoh himself, who was seen as a god. He could not prevent it from occurring, and it affected his household as well.

Not only did the blood of the lamb protect the Israelite families from death and win their redemption it foreshadowed a greater Passover sacrifice that would come in the person of Jesus.

He, too, would shed his blood at Passover, and his sacrifice has provided the means to free us from death and to win our redemption.

Today, thank God for his incredible plan of redemption for every one of us.

## **Friday Devotion: Crossing The Red Sea**

**Read Exodus 14:5-31**

After the final defeat of the Passover, Pharaoh released the children of Israel to leave Egypt. However, he quickly changed his mind and chased them to the edge of the Red Sea. There we see one of the most miraculous deliverances in the entire Bible.

Moses lifts his staff, and the waters split. He leads the nation through the sea as though it is dry ground. The chariots of Egypt, however, are crushed and the people escape.

God's rescue plan is complete.

*When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the Lord had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before him. They put their faith in the Lord and in his servant Moses.*

**Exodus 14:31**

Each of us needs to come to the point where we appreciate all that God has done for us in bringing redemption. Like the nation of Israel, we have an opportunity to put our faith in Him.

As we will see in the coming weeks, the faith of the nation of Israel was both limited and fickle. May our faith be stronger and more long-lasting than theirs was. May it draw us towards desiring God above any other thing in our life. Take a moment to commit yourself to Him once more today.