

Wednesday in Lent 5 2020
"By Faith Moses"
Hebrews 11:24-26

BY FAITH MOSES, WHEN HE WAS GROWN UP, REFUSED TO BE CALLED THE SON OF PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER, CHOOSING RATHER TO BE MISTREATED WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD THEN TO ENJOY THE FLEETING PLEASURES OF SIN. HE CONSIDERED THE REPROACH OF CHRIST GREATER THAN THE TREASURES OF EGYPT, FOR HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO THE REWARD.

Tonight, we consider the faith of Moses. Moses stands in contrast to the other great heroes of the faith we have considered so far, because Moses saw a lot of things that would bolster his faith. Abraham never saw with his eyes the things that were promised to him. Noah took 120 years to build the ark and all along suffered the ridicule of those who wondered why he was building such a big boat. And last week, we considered Joseph who asked that his bones be carried to the Promised Land instead of remaining entombed forever in Egypt. All these saints went with their **ears**, rather than their eyes. They believed in the promise yet to be fulfilled; they believed, but did not see the realization of that promise.

Moses saw a lot with his eyes: the burning bush, the plagues upon Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day, God on Mount Sinai revealing himself in thunder and smoke, and he heard the voice of God delivering to him the Ten Commandments. But notice the writer to the Hebrews does not dwell on these great moments in the story of Moses's life. Instead, what he does is take us back to the early years when Moses was floated down the River Nile in a basket in order to spare his life. He takes us back to when Moses was just getting started in life.

Moses had to remember, at some early point in his life, who he really was: a son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Though he had been raised in

Pharaoh's court and lived a pampered life, he chose the life of a slave. He identified with the children of Israel who served the mighty Pharaoh as his cheap labor forced to build the great buildings of Egypt that still dot the landscape today. He identified with them because they were the heirs to the promise.

In some ways, the choice was thrust upon Moses. He saw one of the children of Israel being mistreated by his Egyptian master. Moses intervened and stuck the man down. He could have just watched all this happen; cruelty was often experienced by slaves. But Moses remembered who he was. He was not a son of Egypt, but a son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was a child of the promise God had made with his forefathers.

So, despite all the grand things Moses would see with his eyes -- grand and glorious things that God would reveal to him by His mighty power -- Moses at this moment in his life had to walk by faith and not by sight. He believed that might doesn't make right, and that his identity as a child of the promise mattered to him.

As a result, Moses had to run away. He left behind the luxury of the palace and went to live as a nomad in the desert. He would live in the land of Midian. He would marry a woman there, Zipporah, and she would bear him a son. Moses would name his son Gershom, "sojourner, foreigner (Ex 2:22)." Moses had become a man without a country -- neither in Egypt, nor in the land of Israel. He was just a foreigner with his family.

So let me ask you: when you picture Moses in your mind's eye, what does he look like? A Charlton Heston-figure, mop of gray hair and beard? I ask you that because I think it is only natural for us that when we think of Moses, we think of his later years. After all, he was 80 years old when God called him from the burning bush. From there, the story of Moses really

takes off! Those last forty years of his life are the exciting ones! But, those early years, there really isn't much to see. But, let us not overlook that fact that the promise was heard and believed by Moses. His people mattered to him, because they were children of the promise.

We, too, are children of the promise. We, too, walk by faith and not by sight. Oh, one day, yes, we will see with our own eyes! We will see the face of God in all of his glory and our faces too will shine just like Moses. But for now, for today, we rely upon our ears -- **ears** tuned to our God who has spoken to us through His Son some two thousand years ago.

The writer to the Hebrews opens his letter with these words, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us **by his Son** (He 1:1)." These "last days" have been going on for a very long time now, but we believe that we are approaching the end ... not just the end of our days but the end of this world as we know it. After all, God has promised to bring us into a new heavens and a new earth.

Do you ever long to walk by **sight** and not by faith? You should, you know. There is nothing wrong with wanting more than just a promise. That is what faith does! It yearns for the promise to be fulfilled. But by the same token, faith stops being faith once that which is promised arrives. Then we walk by sight and not by faith, for on the day we see God face to face, faith will no longer be needed.

But in the meanwhile, today, we continue to yearn for things that yet remain unseen. We yearn for the new heavens and new earth that God has promised. We long to rest from our struggles in the green pastures and quiet waters of heaven. We long for the day our lives will be free from sin, free from the effects of sin, and our bodies free from death.

The writer to the Hebrews mentions just one more thing about Moses, "By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them (He 11:28). Of all the wondrous events in the life of Moses, the writer of Hebrews focuses on that one particular event – the Passover.

So why focus on the Passover? It is because the Passover is all about Christ. Jesus is our Passover lamb. He takes away the sin of the world and, marked by His blood, death "passes over" us. Moses knew that one of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be that One which would cause "all the families of the earth to be blessed (Ge 12:3)."

Moses rejoiced and found comfort in the promise of the coming Messiah. Out in the wilderness, during their forty years in the desert, Moses told the children of Israel, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers -- it is to him you shall listen (De 18:15)."

Moses saw and talk with that Prophet on the Mount of Transfiguration. You will recall the account of our Lord's Transfiguration: Jesus goes up with Peter, James and John on a high mountain and there He is changed before their eyes. They see Him in all his glory, just as Moses saw God on the high mountain. And the voice of God would confirm this prophecy of Moses: "This is my son, my Chosen One; listen to him (Lk 9:35)."

The Evangelist Luke says that on the mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about His upcoming "exodus". Yes, most English versions translate that word as "departure (cf. Lk 9:31)". That is not the best translation. It should really read, "exodus," because God is intentionally drawing our attention to the exodus story of the Old Testament ... for just as Moses led God's children out of the bondage of Egypt, Jesus

was about to go to Jerusalem to bring God's children out of their bondage to sin and death. By His own death, He would destroy death. And by His rising to life again the 3rd day, He would bring freedom and hope to all who follow Him.

This is why the writer to the Hebrews speaks of Moses considering "the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt." Moses was still walking by faith and not by sight.

So yes, Moses saw a lot with his eyes. There is the burning bush, the plagues on Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day, and the whole experience of God thundering on Mount Sinai, but Moses still longed for a Promised Land he would never receive in his lifetime, and for a Savior who was yet to come, who would set all people free.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.