



*Perhaps if I were to say anything
with certainty about this year,
it's that it has changed us.
...Consciousness is rising.*

*—Nathan Sclaro
editor for Dumbo Feather*

**SEVENTEEN SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
27 September 2020**

Invitation to Prayer—Psalm 90:1 & 2

Yahweh, you have been our dwelling-place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Opening Prayer

Come, Spirit of God:
Open the eye of my heart
that I may see you more clearly
and thus love you more completely.

Life can feel so fleeting—
we are alive today
and gone tomorrow.
So teach me to count
each moment as precious.
Help me to be present
right here, right now.
Enable me to follow
your self-giving ways.

Come, Spirit of God:
Awaken me to love's possibilities.
Amen.

Scripture Reading—Deuteronomy 34:1–12

Today will be our final reading from the Exodus narrative. We have skipped over many significant scenes in this pilgrimage from bondage to freedom, but hopefully we have touched on some relevant themes for our own time. Just before this reading, Moses has blessed what will become the twelve tribes of Israel when they cross from the wilderness into the land they will inhabit as free people.

They have spent forty-years in the desert, letting go of old ways and learning how to be people after God's own heart. As we will hear in the reading, this is the end of the journey for Moses. He will die here on the plains of Moab and his body will be buried nearby.

You are invited to pause and place yourself in the story as indicated. Imagining yourself in the scene can reveal much about your own journey with God.

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the LORD showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negeb, and the Plain -- that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees -- as far as Zoar. The LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there."

Imagine you are Moses. How do you feel on seeing the land before you? How do you feel about hearing you will not cross over with the people?

Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord's command. He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day.

Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigour had not abated. The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Imagine you are Joshua. How do you feel setting out as a leader of the people? What might you say to God just now?

Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

Going Deeper

Over this six-week series, we've identified six themes that are part of the journey towards freedom, love and life. They are not exhaustive by any means, but let's consider them again:

- We do not make this journey alone; midwives companion us along the way.
- We are called to turn aside, to behold God's revelation in ordinary things which gives us orientation and direction.
- We are invited to attend well to threshold moments, especially with pause and waiting.
- We must go into the wilderness—real or figurative—the space for enlightenment and transformation.
- We experience God's iconoclastic work along the way—the continual breaking open and enlargement of heart and mind that sinks us deeper into mystery.
- We keep death always before our eyes and learn to see what really matters.

What are you taking with you from our journey with the Exodus narrative this time around?

What, if anything, are you invited to leave behind for greater lightness and freedom?



*Moses looks upon the promised land
by Lesser Ury*

Put yourself in Moses' place in this image,
standing on the plateau of Mount Nebo.

Mountains give a wide view of the landscape.
Life is able to take on a different perspective here.
Notice the golden light beaming down on the plains,
illuminating the promised land before Moses.

What shines out as highlights over the last months for you?

Moses will not enter the land with the people,
his part of this journey has reached its end.

What, if anything, is closing for you at this time?

Of what are you experiencing an end or a needed letting go?

Silent Meditation

*You might choose to spend some moments in silent meditation.
Hold gently the feelings and thoughts that have arisen for you during this time,
releasing everything into God's good care.*

Prayers of Intercession

Eternal, loving God, the sea swirls, the wind blows, a change is upon us. You are a shelter for us in every season. In your heart we find stillness for every storm and peace amidst our insecurity. Hear us as we pray: *Hold us in your grace, free us to love.*

In this year when we have endured many losses, there has been much letting go. Help us to grieve without falling into despair. Fill us with hope, O God.

We pray: *Hold us in your grace, free us to love.*

We pray for those who are bound and oppressed—by fear and anxiety, addiction, inner or outer violence, unjust laws, mental or physical disease from which they can find no relief.

We pray: *Hold us in your grace, free us to love.*

We give thanks for the new life that your Spirit is bringing forth, especially those movements that are seeking justice, fairness, and care for creation. Grant us the courage and strength needed to be bearers of your loving way.

Hear us, we pray: *Hold us in your grace, free us to love.*

We bring to the light of your love those who are on our minds and hearts this day...

We pray: *Hold us in your grace, free us to love.*

Disciples' Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

Blessing

May the God of justice free you to act with courage.
May the Christ of compassion free you to respond with love.
May the Spirit who is in all and through all free you to live.

The love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ and the communion of the Spirit be with us all.