

LECTIONARY REFLECTIONS PROPER 17A
August 30, 2020
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Exodus 3:1-15

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c

Romans 12:9-21

Matthew 16:21-28

Exodus 3:1-15

The theme of identity figures prominently in this Hebrew Scripture, particularly the identity to which God calls the Israelites – a people who are redeemed and loved by the great I AM. The Scripture starts by telling us that Moses is keeping the flocks of his father-in-law. Keeping flocks is humbling work, and people of great social stature normally would not do that. Moses is compelled to step aside from this work to observe an unusual sight – a bush on fire that is not being consumed by the fire. He quickly learns that he is in the presence of God who has come to give him an important mission. God has chosen Moses to be the one who will deliver the Israelites from slavery. At this point, Moses demands a little proof of who God is, and some names begin to drop – I AM WHO I AM, the unpronounceable name of God, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham – names that Moses cannot ignore. The identity of God is unchangeable and Moses has been confronted with that identity. His life will never be the same.

Most of us, while we have not been confronted with the presence of God in an actual burning bush, we have had encounters where we have realized, even if simply in retrospect, that God was calling us into a new life. Perhaps it was a relationship that steered our life in a different direction, or a different job, or even a painful thing like the death of loved one. But after the encounter, and maybe even during, we realized that God was calling us into a new identity. What is your identity changing experience?

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c

This is a psalm of thanksgiving and praise – a good one to recite when one is in a place of gratitude to God and remembrance for how He has been present, even in the difficult times of one's life. This particular psalm is a remembrance of how Israel became enslaved, how the people grew numerous and how God sent Moses and Aaron to redeem them from slavery.

How specifically has God redeemed you? Can this Psalm be a reflection of your gratitude for that?

Romans 12:9-21

Last week, Paul reminded us that in order to discern the will of God we should not conform to this world but should submit ourselves to the renewing of our minds through the presence of Jesus Christ so that we can be completely transformed. Today's reading is a roadmap for how to let your love be genuine. Read it again. It is definitely not a recipe for conforming to the world but for being transformed by the love of Christ.

This might be a good list to sit down with at the end of the day for the purposes of taking a type of inventory to see how you lived your day. Were you zealous, ardent in spirit and serving the Lord? Did

you rejoice in hope, were in patient in suffering and perseverant in prayer...and what about the rest of the list? I suspect that we all would find ourselves falling short at first, but perhaps the more we practiced the better we would get, right? It's worth a try.

Matthew 16:21-28

Poor, impetuous Peter who shone so brightly last week has now very decidedly stuck his foot in his mouth and earned a rebuke from our Lord. Peter shows us how easy it is to set our minds on human things, on the things of the world instead of on how our identity is changed when we place ourselves in the path of Christ and take up our cross. To follow the divine way is to deny one's self and to take up one's cross, and not to prevent others from doing that as well. Finding life means losing life. These are hard words to hear, and we need grace to embrace them.

What crosses do you carry and how do you try to avoid them? Can you open yourself to receive God's grace in order to take up your cross?

COLLECT:

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.