

Sermon, 3rd March 2019, HT evensong

We are all busy people. Busy because there are always more things to do in our daily lives, than there is time to do them.

We tend to think that it is a new phenomenon, because of the modern-day technology we all use nowadays, and because our jobs, our way of life itself, is so very much more complicated than it used to be – or so we persuade ourselves.

Perhaps we think that life long ago had a much slower pace, and there was so much more time for everything, especially communication with God.

But in our first reading this evening, we hear of Moses, looking after his father in Law, Jethro's flock of sheep. Not something that should be especially stressful, one would think, as he watches them feed, as they move gradually towards Mount Horeb, referred to as the Mountain of God, and believed to be an alternative name for Mt Sinai.

There, Moses is so preoccupied with his task of looking after the sheep that God needs to attract his attention through a burning bush that never seems to get burned up. When he spots it Moses is immediately drawn to it because of the strange phenomenon, and that is where God is able to tell him that he is to rescue his people from the hands of their Egyptian task-masters.

But its not something he feels qualified to do, and prevaricates, makes excuses and tries to get out of such a responsible task.

It's not a little different in the case of Christ, in our second reading. Here Our Lord has arrived in Jerusalem, just a few days before he knows he will face his greatest trial, and, as we heard, his mind is troubled by the magnitude of the responsibility that is being placed

upon him, and speaks aloud his uncertainties whether he should ask God to save him from such a fate,....

...or whether he should go ahead because the hour is fast approaching when he will reach the climax of his ministry, when what he does will glorify God's name.

Jesus, like Moses, too is a busy person – he has followers, Disciples and is constantly surrounded by people wanting to hear him speak. His entry into Jerusalem has been triumphant, but he now needs space, a few moments to calm his mind.

And God calls him, too. In the midst of all this action, our Lord receives a message direct from God – to confirm what is in his mind and must do.

Like many other messages from God, though other people are standing nearby, what they hear is only a clap or roll of thunder, whereas Christ himself hears the words clearly, and understands what he should do, direct from the Father.

Its not going to be easy – but Jesus can now feel justified that his mission is on course and that his death will be justified, and that when he is lifted up will draw people to himself.

That's when the crowd start to turn on him – having just accepted him as their Messiah and hailed him as he entered the city; they cannot understand how it is that he must be taken from them. They point to the Hebrew Scriptures that indicate their long-expected saviour will lead them, and not be taken from them – perhaps that's when they start to have their doubts.....

We too live such busy lives. I thought that when I retired from my daytime job I'd have much more time available in the week, but as I'm sure anyone else who has retired will confirm, that just doesn't seem to happen. We all fill our days with more busy things to do,

and there often isn't time to find to listen to what God may be trying to tell us.

So, how does God get our attention today in such a busy world that there is so little time for sitting down and being still? – Being still just seems a waste of our valuable time when we could be doing something far more important?

And no-one has reported seeing a burning bush that doesn't get consumed, as far as I know, recently.

But God has ways to get the messages through to us – despite our busy lives, it is still possible to hear the word of God and respond to it.

I was speaking to someone this week who feels strongly that he is being called to ordained ministry, although he had always felt up to a few months ago that becoming ordained as a priest was totally out of the question,

...ever since he first felt the calling and going through the Diocese's process for starting training for ministry, he has felt ever more sure that this is the right course for him to take.

He didn't hear God's call directly to him, like Moses or Christ, but instead through a growing sense that this was what God intended for him, and that this was what God wanted him to do.

I too can relate to that – I can pray to God for guidance, but have never had a direct and unequivocal reply, but I can feel that I have been and am affirmed in my belief that this is what God wants me to do.

I also believe that God is gently persistent as well as persuasive. Moses didn't want the task that God wanted him to take on ... he didn't think he could persuade Pharaoh to let the Hebrew people

go, ...he didn't think he had the qualities of speech that would encourage the Hebrew people even to follow him if he did succeed in negotiating with Pharaoh, and he thought someone else should take it on. But God wanted him, was persistent, and it paid off in the end.

Jesus knew in his mind what he should do, but he was troubled and unsure, and needed God's reassurance that the task and course he was pursuing was the right one to take.

As we enter the season of Lent this week, the coming season is a good time to try to discern what God may be saying to us, even in our busy lives. One thing is sure, even if we don't accept what we hear the first time, God will still find a way to get through to us, and God won't go away or let us down....

Amen.