

Third Sunday of Lent

I wonder if somewhere comes straight into your mind when you are invited to consider where you meet with God? Perhaps in a favourite chair with a Bible? Maybe in a church, during communal or personal prayer? People sometimes describe meeting God outdoors, in nature. For others, it's indoors, in art or music. Some of us meet God kneeling beside the bed in the early morning hours. Perhaps we meet God in a completely different way altogether.

As we continue our journey of faith, through this season of Lent, today's readings from scripture might help us to further explore the theme of meeting with God. In the Old Testament reading, we heard the well-known Ten Commandments being shared with an existing worshiping community. Each commandment seeks to aid God's people in creating the shape of their daily life. The commandments have been described as focusing around three, inter-related elements of a life of faith: honouring God; living well with others; and keeping the Sabbath. Perhaps, as we read them today, we might consider the ways in which we have met God in each of these three aspects of our lives. Perhaps we might ask ourselves about our seeking to meet with God in our present season; as we shape our lives around our honouring of God, our living well with others, and our Sabbath times.

As we move to consider the other readings set for today, the beginning of Psalm 19 may speak to those of us who meet with God in the created world. As we witness to creations praise of the Creator, we might remind ourselves of the way we can be blessed by an awareness of meeting God in nature. Then, as we read on, the second part of the psalm offers words concerning how live our lives in relation to God. These words express the joy which is to be found in living life in accordance with God's law.

The season of Lent is one in which we prayerfully examine the rules, rhythms, and routines which shape our lives. As we do, we might take the second section of the Psalm's verses as inspiration to ponder how the patterns of our lives enable our meeting with God.

Paul's words in his first letter to the Corinthians are a reminder of our need to meet with God. In these verses we hear that God is the source of life, that God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, that God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

God, says Paul, is faithful and meets with us through the saving love of Jesus Christ.

It is then the words and actions of Jesus in John's Gospel account which speak of meeting places once more. The Temple, throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, is a place where people

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meet with God. John's account describes how the Temple's foundational purpose, as a place to meet with God, is no longer that meeting place.

While we hear that Jesus drives out sheep, cattle, doves and money changers, Jesus is also signalling that the location of the meeting place with God would no longer be in the physical temple, but in the person of Jesus. We are reminded in these verses that, wherever and however we meet with God, whatever the rhythms and routines we establish, our meeting with God is made possible through Jesus. We can draw near and meet with God because God came near to us.

As the season of Lent continues, perhaps we might take the readings from this morning as an invitation to reflect upon our meeting with God. We might take this chance to look back on the past few weeks and notice where we have found ourselves

meeting God. We might consider the way the rhythms and routines of our lives might best make space for our meeting with God in the coming weeks. We might simply take time to be thankful that God meets with us, comes close, and leads us always into life.