

Prayer: *Community-creating God, may our words and deeds be a consistent witness to you. We pray for wise leaders who by their lives reveal you and model your ways for us. May we be shaped as a community so that your love is clearly seen in and through us. Amen.*

God-revealing life – is what it is about I think – our lives we know are to be lived in ways that reveal our God –in- Christ. This teaching has been a part of our faith since the earliest recorded traditions, which as Christ's followers we have added his teachings to the 'book' of our teaching. For us today we dip into the lives of the ancient ones rather than Jesus knowing he based his life and his teachings on this material and remember it was the only material his listeners knew!

Today is the welcome Joshua and a farewell to the presence of Moses in Joshua's life. But not before the scribes have told us just how much like Moses he is! The Talmud "The face of Moses was like the face of the Sun, while the face of Joshua was like the face of the moon." It is said that this means the greatness of Joshua was reflection of his teacher, Moses, - harsh on Joshua who was a tremendous leader in his own right – but an indication of the honour that was and is accorded to Moses.

This is what the record says about the conclusion of Moses: Deut 34: "9 Now **Joshua** son of Nun was **filled with the spirit of wisdom** because Moses had laid his hands on him. *So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses.* 10 *Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,* 11 *who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt--to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land.* 12 *For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel."*

In all the descriptions of Moses's life in God there comes through for me of somehow in Moses a unique sense of continuity between the Lord God and Moses. Like in this "face to face embrace" that only Moses experienced that thins the edge between man and God and which Moses in his humanity did not recognise or see it, stepped over – and so was only allowed to see the Promised Land.

Joshua has been in training for years, decades and finally has Moses hand on / hand over the Spirit of Wisdom that he might lead the people – as Moses led them. Today we are told how ^{1*} the mantle of leadership has passed from Moses to Joshua. Last week we explored how the kind of leadership had to change – no longer a salve people on the move towards a Promised Land – now it is how to settle.

BUT, but before they 'dwell' / live / settle and have all the good things the Psalm promised, which was plenty: ^{2*} Remember **it is a "song** of thanksgiving on behalf of those who have been rescued by God. So for Moses / Joshua's people they were celebrating that though they wandered in the wilderness, God guided them back to human habitations. Though God *can* turn rivers and streams dry and make fertile land unproductive for the wicked, God also makes the desert fertile and filled with water for those that God rescues." And they definitely considered themselves a 'rescued' people who were desperate to settle.

But – but again it's just not that simple, Moses hands over the leadership to Joshua but do the people accept? In my experience authority is earned as well as given, it is part of a relationship not only with the Lord and the leader – but also between the people and the leader. It is not healthy and life-giving if it is grasped / hungered for and ends destroying 'life' – in my opinion and so for me this attitude reveals the absence of God in the life of the community. Cv

^{1*} What we have today is beginning of Joshua's work – he has been commissioned and is exalted in the eyes of all Israel (v.7). This exaltation by the Lord is not for the sake of the new leader's reputation or standing. The purpose is clearly stated: 'so that they may know that I will be with you as I was with Moses.' Joshua's leadership, like Moses' before him, finds its reason for being in the comfort and

knowledge of the people that Yahweh is with them. **Leadership within the community of faith is all about communication to the people that God is with them.**

Moses life revealed God – and for Joshua to lead his life was expected to be the same – these two men are our faith-life models – how well do we measure up? We being followers of Jesus talk about letting his life shine through us – we as members of ST Johns our Vision statement – says that we believe we are the Gospel to all people. The Good news Jesus lived is in us to share... Do we have God-revealing lives?

The Text for us today explains just how Joshua's life was modelled on Moses. ^{1*} It begins with our verse 7 – and continues as Moses' name is mentioned no less than six times in the first seven verses of the book, and not just in reference to his death. Joshua is described as 'Moses' assistant' (1:1) and as the Lord speaks to Joshua he speaks of Moses as 'his servant' (1:2) and of the land as now promised to Joshua 'as I promised to Moses'. The Lord says: 'As I was with Moses, so I will be with you' (1:5) and finally calls upon Joshua to be careful 'to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you' (1:7). In 1:8 Joshua is called upon to make the law (as given by Moses) the foundation upon which he lives and acts and speaks.

^{1*} H Wallace says that this emphasis on "continuity is neither simply for the purposes of consistency, nor for the success of the 'project' at hand." Remember the 'project' Joshua has is to invade the 'Promised Land' – no small task. So the insistence on leadership attributes is not because of the task – it is not an end in itself, but rather it is **a symbol** of the continuing presence of the Lord with his people.

God- with– us, before Jesus one of the ways God was revealed to the people was through the lives of their leaders – Moses and Joshua. And just for a moment try to remember other ancient faith leaders like King Saul / David or Solomon or the Prophets like Samuel or Judges like Deborah and Samson... and this time remember that they are remembered in *part* because of the ways their lives revealed God – or *denied* him. Even with Jesus, I believe it is a hunger within each one of us this morning to know the Lord is with us, to feel his touch, to see his glory and we know when in our lives that is gloriously evident and dimly felt... we need it to sustain our lives – just as the ancients did.

We are following Moses and Joshua's people – it's quick to point out a few of the times ^{1*} this need can be seen as the subject of passages in the Book of Exodus. The people questioned it (Exod 16:4-8), Aaron doubted it (Exod 32:1-6), and even Moses needed assurance of it (Exod 33:12-23). The presence of the Lord with the people was essential for their liberation from the powers of Egypt which kept them captive. It was essential for their survival in the wilderness and now it is essential for their **taking hold of the promise** to them. Just as Moses was reminded, it was not a matter of whether he knew the Lord, but that the Lord knew him **that** was paramount in his work and ministry (Exod 33:12), so with the people what **ultimately matters** is not *their* faithfulness to the Lord but the Lord's faithful presence **with** them.

It is this dimension that the psalm offers wisdom for our thinking. ^{1*} You see, in this psalm thanksgiving is the response of those who recognize the goodness and 'steadfast love' of God (v. 1). God's own nature is what gives rise to praise in thanksgiving. It is not that God is simply good to those who praise him. Thanksgiving arises after deliverance from many types of situations. It is an incentive to those who are faithful to maintain their prayer. The past and its acts of deliverance give us cause for hope for the future because they reveal ways in which the Lord is present with his people.

We sometimes get caught in the need to be faithful to the Lord and do all manner of things so that our lives reveal Him – when this tells us that what ultimately matters is that the Lord is faithfully present with us – anyway – every way – always!!! Do we make it harder that it should be? Too hard? God loves us so much nothing can separate us from being together, revealing each other one to another – God in us – us in God – we are a visible presence of the invisible and Holy Spirit – wisdom of God given so long ago to Joshua. Is it something we can take away and think over – How God is revealed in our lives? Amen