



(image: Nikki)

We take a breath and come into God's presence.

Holy Spirit draw us close and minister your grace to us. May we recognise your presence in our midst. **Amen.**

God of all, through all time and in all places, in each circumstance and season, You call us together in this place and welcome us with open arms as your beloved children. Each one of us is precious to you and called by you.

In this time of great change and uncertainty, you are unchanging and ever faithful. Through this time together, let us feel you speaking to us, leading us, teaching us, Filling us with your spirit and strengthening us for the journey ahead. **Amen.**

Bible Reading: Deuteronomy 34:1-12

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." 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. 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.

Reflection

Today, we come to the end (or is it?!) of the story of Moses, as we read of his death. Moses has had a dramatic life from being saved by Hebrew midwives and his mother and sisters, placed in the reeds and brought up an Egyptian with the Pharaoh's daughter. He spends forty years in the wilderness, fleeing when he is seen murdering an Egyptian taskmaster brutally beating a Hebrew slave. In the desert he witnesses a burning bush from which he hears and beholds God's voice, and learns he has been chosen to lead God's people from enslavement to freedom. Many plagues and passage through the red sea later, he completes the first part of their journey. During the next forty years he is given the ten commandments; the people complain and lose faith; Moses strikes a rock to give water in anger, and in their sin he pleads for them; a decision it is inferred leads him not to be able to enter the promised land with them.

How can this godly man, the one who has had the closest encounter with God ever recorded, performed such signs and wonders, saved the people from enslavement not now be permitted to enter the promised land?

In today's reading, the reason is not given but it seems Moses accepts his not entering it almost serenely. I have been pondering on possible reasons for this, and I came up with three. I wonder if you would add more?

Firstly, is it because he is so grateful for those he has guided and nurtured being now able to end their wandering and settle down? Rather like a loving parent/sponsor who delights in seeing those they have charge for flourish.

Secondly, is it because he is exhausted, having given his all looking after his rather challenging charges? He is over 100 after all!

Thirdly, is it because he has 'seen' and spent time in God's presence and with seen a greater vision, that of a heavenly promised land with God, beyond this earthly one? Has he seen it? Has he felt it in his meetings with God? Is he looking forward to be reunited with his ancestors, as the others now begin a new story?

Although Moses is not permitted to enter the land, he is given an extraordinary view of it. Imagine standing on a mountain top with God overlooking such beauty, being reassured everything will be Ok for those he has cared for, and to know that he has completed the impossibility of the task that God had asked of him.

And what is so wonderful, if we skip forward thousands of years to the transfiguration of Jesus, who does Jesus talk with there on that mountaintop in the promised land alongside Elijah? Moses! On his death Moses inherited a far greater promised land, one we can only dream of.

We may feel the disappointment of dreams unfulfilled, but Moses's ending points us to the beyond, to the eternal promises of God.

Rev'd Kathryn M. Schifferdecker reflecting on this draws us to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's speech given the night before he was assassinated:

Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life.. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people will get to the promised land.

(quoted from A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. Ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperCollins, 1986)

She says 'That great modern-day prophet used the story of Israel's first great prophet to speak of hope and faith to a people who needed both. That story can continue to speak to people today who, even in the midst of disappointment, (or today's uncertainty) live by faith in the God of Moses, the God who does indeed fulfil promises.'

Praise be to God! **Amen.**

Worship Hymns

Great is thy faithfulness - Lucy Gibson (attached)

In heavenly love abiding with lyrics:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXc04P8d654&ab_channel=stevebginn

This is the air I breathe with lyrics Michael W. Smith:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEDcKZB7r2A&ab_channel=Razatlad051968

You raise me up with lyrics Selah:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DorNUsi5LE&ab_channel=Luvss2ride

Prayers of Intercession

Almighty God,

We thank-you:

For your indescribable love and eternal faithfulness to us.

For all the blessings in our lives seen and unseen.

For a world of beauty and promise.

In this time of uncertainty, we pray:

For the world's healing from the pandemic.

For overwhelmed hospital, community and mental health personnel and services.

For our government and world leaders, be the wisdom and compassion in their difficult decision making.

For local governments, businesses and communities, struggling under changing and increased restrictions.

For peace and recovery wherever there is violence, injustice and unrest.

For those seeking work, those living with poverty and limited resources, those fearing for their livelihoods, those who go to bed hungry.

For the homeless, displaced and trafficked.

For the estranged, fearful, lonely and those missing close physical connections.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

Eternal God,

We pray for all who are unwell and name before you ...

For those living with pain or awaiting operations.

For all who struggle in body, mind or spirit, and those who care diligently for them.

Surround them with your healing love, and the knowledge that they are deeply precious to you.

We commend to your safe keeping those who have recently died ...
and ask your comfort for those who grieve.

We give thanks for those whom we have loved and thank-you for the reassurance of your heavenly promised land.

Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

In this moment of stillness we lift before you the burdens and prayers we carry in our own hearts

Holy Trinity of God bless the prayers of our hearts and those for whom we pray. **Amen.**

Joining all our prayers together we say the prayer our saviour taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven;
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you and those you love always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**