

Devotion

Diakonia- Journey with the First Covenant People

By: Mary Beth Frederick

I have always thought it a shame that our knowledge of the faith journeys of the Apostles and early disciples is practically non-existent. How much they would have to share about their time walking with Jesus and figuring out what their particular “what’s next” was! How unlike the First Testament, where the stories of those divinely selected or appointed by God to play crucial roles in the history of the Hebrew people reveal much about those folks and their unique relationships with God. We people of the Second Testament can learn from their journeys.

Like Abraham, we must listen to God’s promises and act on them. When we have doubts about the meaning of these promises or have cause to doubt God’s intention to fulfill those promises, we must walk into the desert and ask God, “How can this be?” Perhaps God doesn’t need us as partners, but he has chosen us to be so. Partners talk, argue and compromise because they have trust.

Like Jacob, we are all have past issues, chronic weaknesses or doubts with which we struggle. We should not fear wrestling with these things. We should feel free to call on God to “come on down” or send down an angel to duke it out. We may walk away altered, but without fear that those issues, weaknesses or doubts need delay our journey here.

Like Joseph, we may find ourselves odd man out or in a pit from which we cannot escape. Our best choice is to rely on God. When imprisoned by our own voices, situations physical, mental or emotional, we must continue to act righteously though our hearts may despair. Regardless of situations, we must embrace the insight and revelations the spirit of God provides and not deny them. We are to speak the truth, even when the result of the speaking is not known to us. And should the time come, we must speak the truth to power the consequences be damned. If God gives us words to speak to someone, we must act on it.

Moses recognized the burning bush as an extraordinary thing: he found himself standing on holy ground. We too should be alert to the sacred, to the holy moments in our lives. Whether as spectacular as the burning bush or the gentle as a breeze.

Like David, we are not perfect. We have flaws, perhaps some chronic, but we still can be used by God if we choose to be authentic. Honestly brutal in self-assessment. Willing to confess. Rejoice in forgiveness. Atone when possible. And always remember God’s faithfulness in things big and small.

Perhaps we will be called to lead up front like Deborah, or perhaps more behind the scenes, like Miriam. Some of us may face quick life altering choices like Rahab or find ourselves in strange lands, actual or metaphorical. We will have to trust God with our futures and the final fruits of our labors.

Prophets of God are called. Not self-appointed. Prophecy is more than calling out the hypocrisy and failing of others. With few exceptions, God's prophets loved their people, mourned over their people and delivered bad news in the hope of renewal. God's prophets called attention to Israel's faithlessness, but they also provided an answer. "Return to God's ways." And the people whom they addressed knew what that meant. If you are to be God's prophet and not just a self-appointed shrill, you are to love those hearing your prophecy. Don't consider them below you. They are wayward, but no less a child of the Most High. You must provide hope and a concrete way forward.

Let us pray: Gracious Lord, through Jesus Christ we have become your adopted children. We need not travel to temples or holy places to worship, nor burn sacrifices, you dwell within us. You have made us partners in your reconciliation of the world to yourself. Help us to be authentic and courageous. When we struggle, remind us of those people of faith in the first covenant. May we be reminded of their examples when we stumble or wander far afield. By your grace may we regain our footing and follow your pillar of light as you lead the way. Amen.