

<b>Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2011</b> <b>Cathedral, Grahamstown</b> <b>7.30 &amp; 9.30 a.m.</b>		<b>15<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year A</b> <b>Spiritfest &amp; NAF 2</b> <b>400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the KJV</b>
Exodus 2:11-22	Ps 69:6-14	Romans 8:9-17
		Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23
<b>GROWING INTO WHOLENESS</b>		

## **FOCUS**

### **The main focus of the sermon**

- Growing into wholeness

## **BODY – Introduction**

“Moses fled from Pharaoh’s presence and went and settled in Midian. He sat down by a well.... So it came about that Moses agreed to stay with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah in marriage. She bore him a son, and Moses called him Gershom; ‘because’, he said, ‘I have become an alien in a foreign land.’ ” (Ex 2:15b, 21-22).

## **1<sup>st</sup> POINT – Thanks**

We have arrived at the end of another Spiritfest, the end of another National Arts Festival, with mixed emotions - a real sense of achievement; relief that it is over – until next time; exhaustion; satisfaction; good memories. A job well done.

We give thanks for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the King James (Authorised) Version of the Bible, 1611; for the work of the Bible Society, Ds Gerrit Kritzinger and Ben Fourie; for all the wonderful celebrations, acts of worship, exhibitions, fascinating lectures.

Thank you to the team – Maggy Clarke and the Spiritfest committee; Basil and Aphwe, venue officers; Clive, tourist guide co-ordinator; Peter Rose, MC for lectures; Barbara & Wilf Stout and our choir, so much music. Congratulations to Jeanette Eve for her wonderful work on the Gould guide. I hesitate to single people out, but I hope that you will acknowledge all that they and their workers/supporters have done.

Today is thank-you and farewell to Michael Whisson. Michael has done and contributed so much to Rhodes University, to Grahamstown, to the Cathedral. It is said that if you want to get out of doing things in Grahamstown, you must either leave, or die. Michael is doing neither, at least not yet. But he is off on his travels, for a while, before he returns in due course. We thank God for him.

Today is also thank-you and farewell to Barbara and Wilf Stout, as they leave to go to Bangkok. Wilf takes up the position of headmaster at a school; Barbara will return here in August. We thank God for them both.

For me personally, this is a time to say thank you, and to invite you to my graduation celebrations on Saturday: a service of thanksgiving, here in the Cathedral, followed by a serious feast. This is my gift to you all, and many in the diocese, to thank you for your support through these past two years of study. Surrounded by PhDs and other luminaries, it might seem strange to celebrate with a mere Masters. But we live in a context where any academic achievement is acknowledged and celebrated. In some ways, this feels for me like a home-coming: to say, after 3 ½ years in Grahamstown, we are home. I could not have done the work without your support, and it is good to have a chance to thank everyone in this way.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> POINT – Our deepest longings**

But back to Moses. Tom Wright, former Bishop of Durham, identifies four areas of contemporary concern in our world, and in our hearts: the longing for justice; the quest for spirituality; the hunger for relationships; and the delight in beauty.<sup>1</sup> Not as a hierarchy of needs, but as quests or searches or yearnings, longings, that shape our lives, give us purpose. We might recognise something of ourselves in one or more of these concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> *Simply Christian*, SPCK, 2006, ix.

“Each one of these points beyond itself. In each of them we catch the echo of a voice, the sound of someone speaking just round the corner, just out of sight.”<sup>2</sup>

The National Arts Festival is an opportunity for us to explore and enjoy at least some of those areas, and Spiritfest is our particular offering as the Cathedral. We provide the space for people to explore and enjoy beauty; to enjoy wonderful acts of worship and to reflect on aspects of spirituality.

In the story of Moses, we see some of these things as well: the longing for justice; the quest for spirituality; the hunger for relationships.

The story of Moses is many things. It tells us how a people were set free from slavery and oppression. It shows how a rough, blunt instrument was shaped by adversity and hardship into a fine tool, how a angry, violent young man was transformed into someone called and directed by God. The story of Moses is the story of the growth of a leader. It is the story of a young man passionate for justice, longing for relationships, gradually discovering spirituality and depth. It is the story of you and me, in our response to God, in our stumbling steps towards wholeness, in our search for meaning and purpose in the midst of the things we face.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> POINT – Moses at the well**

Ex 2:11 – Moses is a young adult, grown up. But who is he? Is he an Egyptian prince, a ruler and overlord? Is he a Hebrew slave, one of the oppressed? Where does he belong? Where do his loyalties lie? With Pharaoh and Pharaoh’s daughter, who raised and educated him? With his blood parents, his mother who gave him birth and nursed him?

2:11 – he goes out to his own kinsmen and observes their labours (NRSV – forced labour). It is a turning point, kairos (truth) moment,

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<sup>2</sup> Tom Wright, 2006.

for him. He sees their oppression, and makes a choice – he kills an Egyptian.

2:13 - The result is not the liberation of his people. They turn on him. “Who set you up as an official and judge over us? Do you mean to murder me as you murdered the Egyptian?” Acts of supposed “justice” without spirituality – worship, dependency, guidance - without the connectedness and humility that relationships give us, get nowhere. Moses has become the oppressor, not the liberator. He has to flee for his life. He leaves Egypt and goes into exile, into solitude, away from his community, away from the public eye, to Midian.

2:15 He sits down by a well. A symbol for the soul, the hidden riches and depths of the human person, the hidden world, the unconscious (Jungian psychology); the deep interior presence of God (Teresa of Avila).<sup>3</sup> Jesus at the well of Samaria: “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” (Jn 4:13f.) Our need to sit next to our own wells; and to drink from the well of the Spirit. Discover spirituality. At the well – spirituality - Moses protects Zipporah from the marauding shepherds – justice - meets her father, receives her in marriage, becomes father to a son. Relationships.

2:22 Moses names his son Gershom: “I have been (become) an alien in a foreign land.” Which foreign land? Egypt? Midian? His own life? The place of exile becomes his place of belonging, spirituality, relationships, conversion, transformation, being shaped into the person who later would be called, directed, used by God.

## CONCLUSION

Justice, spirituality, relationships, beauty. God takes the raw material, our lives, to shape us into the people he calls us to be. We offer all that we are, to Him.

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<sup>3</sup> Barton, RH, 2008. *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*. IVP, 41.