

The Rev. Amanda Eiman
October 29, 2017
21st Sunday after Pentecost
Deuteronomy 34:1-12

Today in our Old Testament reading we hear the ending of the story of Moses..... how he was called and sent to bring Israel out of bondage in Egypt into Canaan, from slavery to the land of milk and honey. And he did. We hear in Deuteronomy that “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.

We hear that Moses was brought right up to the edge of the promise land. God let him see it, but then he died. Right there. He himself never made it in to that land.

Now many read this as a story about punishment, or the long term effects of disobedience.

Because the back story is that even though Moses was one of the great prophets and a servant of the Lord, earlier at the waters of Meribah, Moses disobeyed the Lord by striking instead of speaking to the rock as God had commanded him. On other occasions, God had commanded Moses to use his staff to accomplish various signs and wonders. But for him to do this at Meribah implied that he'd begun to assume that he and his staff itself had some kind of power.

Moses had had the chance to show Israel just how holy God is by simply speaking to the rock and letting God send water gushing out of it. By striking it instead, Israel's leader implied to Israel that he was somehow responsible for that water. (Doug Bratt)

So while this is perhaps a story of the consequences of disobedience, it can also remind us too of another reality. The fact that Moses was brought right up to the edge of the promise land but not into it, the fact that his time ended before the next step of that journey, while

there was still more work to do, reminds us that this is a story also about transitional leadership. Moses' leadership, like all leadership in this world, is temporary. Moses was used as God's vessel and he and served for a time, but not forever. We are all transitional leaders. And He, nor do we, always get to choose the boundaries of the time that we serve.

Because we like Moses, are part of a great line of prophets, apostles, martyrs, faithful leaders and many generations of leaders in God's name. There are leaders from whom we inherit, and leaders to whom we bequeath. Moses inherited his leadership from God, and bequeathed it back to God, and also Joshua, who finished the journey into the land.

And we, here at St. David's have inherited this place from generations past, and when our time on earth is finished, we leave it to those yet to come.

I was reminded of this dynamic last Sunday afternoon as our former Sexton, Michael Merrick, gave a tour of the old Saint David's graveyard. About 25 or so of us gathered at the lych gate and were

guided by Michael through the graves as he told stories about the people whose bodies lay to rest just outside these walls. We learned about prominent leaders of the church community, some were members of the military, government, owned businesses, and all had family histories, love stories, children and grandchildren, friends, failures, successes, struggles and joys. As Michael fleshed out their lives for us, I imagined them, standing with us, their presence reminding us that St Davids is not just the church it is today, but has a long past filled with dynamic people and leaders. [300 years of](#) it. Our story stretches back to them, and it stretches beyond us into many more years into the the future.

We are woven throughout history, connected with those who have gone before and those yet to come.

And that's a gift, because that means that God is using us - you and me - and them -for Gods very important work of bringing about the Kingdom. We are being used as vessels for Gods plan and therefore we are not just relying on our power to do this work, but Gods power. It's not all about us and the result doesn't rest solely on us. We can make mistakes, we are forgiven for them, and we can start again,

because we always have access to God's amazing grace.

And it also means that part of our leadership is our stewardship - how we use the time that God has given us in this place, and the gifts that God has given us, to be effective and generous leaders. We are examining our stewardship in our life together during this season at St. David's. You and I have been asked to examine our gifts and to make a commitment to giving them generously to this place, and our mission of knowing God in Christ and making Christ known to others.

Because we are **stewards** of **this** place for a time - we have inherited it from those who have gone before and we will pass it on to those who are yet to come. So God's faithfulness extends beyond our view. And we have the privilege of being a part of that larger, grand plan. You and I and Moses are all transitional leaders in God's great design. How will you be a steward of the gifts God has given you this next year?

There is one other interesting piece to note from this passage from Deuteronomy today - some biblical scholars believe that no height

exists from which Moses could *actually* see all the territory that God had promised Israel before he died. We sense, then, that God has already begun to lift up Israel's leader from this world for him to even be able to see all of Canaan. (Doug Bratt).

A foreshadowing of the new life to come – that one ushered in by Jesus Christ –

So that when God's people die, God - the God of burning bushes; of smoke and fire pillars, manna, and quail, - immediately takes us into God's eternal presence, in preparation for eternity in the new heaven and earth. And when we get there we will have the chance to look back on our life and see even more fully how it is connected with all of God's people- and how that land flows with something far, far better than milk and honey. (Randy Owens)

And for that we can say Alleluia! Amen!