

**First Fifteen: March 14-18**  
**Focus Scripture: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent – Luke 9:57-62**

**Monday: Exodus 3:1-6**

**Going Deeper:** Have you ever found yourself lost in thought mesmerized by fire... watching it dance and move as if it was alive... consuming everything within its reach leaving only ashes as it burns. The story of Moses encounter with God in the burning bush is wonderful story. It reveals a rich and mysterious thread between humanity and the divine pulling us closer to discover our own story of God's appearing. Clearly God is the initiator, as God always is, seeking to catch our attention and draw us closer. The image of fire that does not consume or burn what fuels it calls us forward just as it did Moses. God is the burning bush in all our lives, inviting us to come close to feel the heat of the fire, it's evocative glow as it's divine mystery both illuminate and purify. Can you remember a burning bush moment when you knew God was close, and yet in this closeness while you felt the warmth and assurance of God's love you also may have become deeply aware within this sacred moment you felt the need to look away? *"Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look."* (Ex. 3:6) Holy ground is not in any one location, God is everywhere, making all of life holy ground. What makes a moment holy is when we stop to notice or catch a glimpse long enough to become aware that God is near and, in this nearness, we also realize our disconnection from God. This disconnection is what we call sin. This awareness is what often drives our need to look away. And yet... the fire that consumes us is the same one that invites us to come close... and in are moving toward God in this divine dance we discover our restoration.

**Prayer:** Lord of light, fire and illumination... during this season of Lent open my eyes to see those places where your fire invites me to come closer... help me not back away in fear or shame but move closer knowing within your all-consuming love I will find my true self, my place within your grace and join your people who continue to become a burning fire for our world. Amen.

**Tuesday: Exodus 3:7-14**

**Going Deeper:** Out of the frying pan and into the fire, is an expression I have heard all my life, usually when I was facing a hard choice or difficult challenge. Moses moves from a fire that did not consume to a relationship with One who challenged him to trust a life changing call. Moses was an outsider, and this was his primary objection... I don't know You, and I am not really one of them, so why would your people follow and respond to me? As you read these verses listen to Moses' exchange with God... notice the back and forth... *"I have heard my people... So, I am sending you... but who am I... I will be with you... but who are you?"* The question, "What is your name?" becomes an opportunity to deepen our understanding of who God is for each of us. The textual response to Moses' question is Yahweh, which we typically translate LORD, but here Yahweh is not simply God's name is, it is used to reveal who God is through the meaning of God's name... The exact meaning of this translation is uncertain. The translations that are the most agreed upon are "I Am that I Am, or I will Be what I will Be." More

succinctly in my words... I Am is the One who causes all things to be. I wonder if you can put yourself in to this story, listening to this exchange between God and Moses... what do you hear God saying to you? What do you need to hold on to... what are you called to release as you allow the fire that is God to both draw you closer, while also consuming you so you can respond to the One who calls and sends us all.

**Prayer:** My infinite, mysterious God, you who is both the beginning as well as ending of all there is to be... help me see myself not as a small and insignificant aspect of you plan, but as one who is called to go where I dared not dream, to reach out to people and in places I did not think were open to me. Open my heart so I am respond your call and fulfill my dreams. Amen.

### **Wednesday: Psalm 19:1-6**

**Going Deeper:** Take time today to notice where and when you experience the voice of God. As this Davidic Psalm reminds us... *"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of God's hands."* (Ps. 19:1 – NIV) God's voice is not something we hear; but it is something we can experience. God's voice, or our experience of God's voice penetrates through our distractedness calling us to look up, or look down, or simply look around. When we finally allow ourselves to be still long enough to hear it, the silence is breath-taking! The images used by the psalmist that reveal the voice of God are from nature. The heavens declare, the skies proclaim, although there is no utterance, and no words are used... nonetheless their voice carries God's message to the end of the earth. I encourage you to notice the beauty around you so easily witnessed this time of year, but don't stop there. Notice where and when you feel the wordless pull of God in those places we typically don't think of as "burning bush" moments... in the car, while standing in line, or back among one another with our faces now uncovered. Listen for what is stirred within you, what passions arise, where your do your thoughts move within these moments... and most importantly do you sense a specific guidance or direction you have needed? *"His rising-place is at one end of heaven, and his circuit reaches the other; nothing escapes his heat."* (Psalm 19:6 – TANAKH Translation) These words remind us that God is available to us, God is constantly revealing to us all that is needed from us is to simply look up, notice and be present... and in doing so we will be changed.

**Prayer:** Lord of life and restoration, our world is beginning to bloom. It reminds us that change is near, a change of season, a warming of the air around us... use these changes to grab our attention, cutting through our distractedness... helping us to see this new life you bring into your world not only around us, but within us as well. Amen.

### **Thursday: Psalm 19:7-14**

**Going Deeper:** Whether the word is *"law, statutes, precepts, commands, or ordinances"* (NIV) the psalmist wants us to know God's leading and direction lead us to restoration, wisdom, joy, and the opening of our eyes. These teachings of God to which the psalmist refers most likely are Shema, as well as the "Law" delivered by Moses. The word Shema means "listen" it is the opening word of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 where the

people of God are called to love God with all our heart, being and strength. These verses were and are to be used by God's people to help focus and guide our lives. The decalogue or ten commandments which are found in Exodus 20, as well as Deuteronomy 5 rather than being restrictive were meant to be life giving in their instruction. The writer of Psalm 19 calls us to see the congruent message within our natural world as it reveals God's abundance and blessing and the spoken and written word of God as we have transcribed it from our experience. God's revelation is consistently life giving whether it is declared from nature or from God's Spirit as we listen to the message of our scriptures. This happens if and when we are undistracted and aware. And when we are not, there is grace... *"Clear me of any unknown sin and save your servant from willful sins. Don't let them rule me."* (Psalm 19:12b-13a – CEB) The Psalmist asks... *"Can anyone know what they've accidentally done wrong?"* in Ps 19:12a, although I wonder if the implied meaning of this question is not asked as a way to direct us back to the teachings of God, both spoken and unspoken... as for me I consider Jesus' words of instruction we know as the "golden rule" as a good place to begin if I am seeking to live intentionally. (Matthew 7:12)

**Prayer:** Lord, you call us to consider what we do to others, choosing to treat them the way we would want to be treated, to respond to others the way we want people to respond to us... and in living this way we fulfill the essence of all we are called to be. It seems so simple and yet I know it requires much from me, my heart given to you, my focus upon the needs of others, your blessings which are on display ever where I look. Hear my prayer O Lord, amen.

**Friday: John 1:35-39**

**Going Deeper:** News of something new, and exciting travels fast. When we have had a great experience, we want to share it with others, often encouraging them to go check it out, whether it is a restaurant, movie, or book. That is also the invitation of discipleship... simply "Come and see." When Jesus realizes he is being followed he asks the obvious question, "What are you looking for?" But this question has a double meaning, not only why are you following me, but is there something more you need and are wondering where to find it. These followers' response tells us they heard Jesus' question as a call to something more. In asking, "where are you staying," they weren't curious about where Jesus lived, they were seeking an invitation to come closer. It is said first century Rabbis often encouraged their disciples to follow them so closely they would be covered in the dust of their Rabbi's feet. In this call the Rabbi was challenging them to become pay attention, to follow with intention, and in doing so they would become so completely familiar with their Rabbi's teaching, their ways of seeing, hearing, and living in our world, that they could then take on the Rabbi's message and make it their own... reflecting everything that they had been taught through their own lives. As we come to the close of the second week of Lent how is it going? What challenges have arisen, or new awareness has begun to open for you as you have taken time to focus of God's call during this season. We are all followers, and Jesus' invitation to "Come and see" is ongoing, it is an open invitation to learn, to grow and become more deeply aware as we are covered in his dust.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you asked your disciples to “come and see.” You challenged them to discover their own cross, which often sounds more like self-denial rather than life lived abundantly... or life in the fullest. (John 10:10) Help me see the connection that we discover from letting go and receiving life as you desire for me. Amen.