

PEOPLE OF THE PRESENCE (Hannah Heather)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

Exodus 3:1-8a (NIVUK)

¹Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.'

⁴When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!' And Moses said, 'Here I am.'

⁵'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.'⁶ Then he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷The Lord said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey...

Like Moses after his encounter with the presence of God in the burning bush, we too are called to be a people who are **radically defined by the fire...**

1. The presence / fire of God is **supernatural**. v.2 – 'though the bush was on fire it did not burn up'
2. The presence / fire of God is **fascinating and attractive**. v.3 – 'I will go over (turn aside) and see this strange sight'
3. The presence / fire of God is **sacred**. v.5 – 'Take off your sandals (remove what is impure) for the place where you are standing is holy ground'. It requires **sacrifice** – from the Latin *sacre-fice* = 'to make sacred'
4. The presence / fire of God is **compassionate**. v.7 – 'I have seen the misery of my people... I am concerned'
5. The presence / fire of God is **redemptive**. v.8. – 'I have come down to rescue them'
6. The presence / fire of God brings **hope**. v.8 – 'a land flowing with milk and honey'

Acts 2:1-4

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

The fire of God's presence, which Moses had witnessed, came to rest on the church at Pentecost. 'We are', Hannah says, 'the burning bush of the New Testament'...

- How can we be 'supernatural people'? What does that even mean in 2022?
- Hannah reminded us that, 'God only spoke when Moses turned aside'. How do we 'turn aside' and 'situate ourselves in the presence of God'?
- Hannah said that we are 'called to live lives that don't make sense'. How do we live in a way that makes people curious? How have people found your life to be 'fascinating and attractive' (rather than just weird)?
- Do you agree with Hannah when she says, 'we are in a culture that desires the spiritual but despises the sacred'?
- What do you think that means? What do you think it might mean to 'pursue purity'?
- What might it mean to be a truly compassionate people? In Exodus 3:7-8 God speaks of engaging eyes, ears, hearts, and bodies¹ ('I have seen... I have heard... I am concerned... I have come down...'). How, practically, might we do that?
- As redeemed people, how do we offer redemption to others? How can we be 'good at being the church, and not just good at going to church'?
- What might it mean to be a people of hope? What is the hope that we have to offer others? Milk and honey, or something better than that?

¹ Metaphorically, perhaps in God's case, but not so for us!