

Year C, March 24, 2019
3 Lent
Christ Church, Mexia

The story of the burning bush... Too bad it isn't always that obvious when God is talking to us. Or, on second thought, maybe we don't want it to be that obvious – after all, we don't always want to hear what God has to ask of us or tell us – do we? Even Moses asked, "But why me?" Why me?

I could be killed if I go back to Egypt. And why would the Jews listen to me, I was raised in Pharaoh's house. Why would Pharaoh listen to me and let his slaves leave, the ones who do all the work for him. And I don't even know your name.

The Rev. Rob Gieselmann refers to these types of unwanted messages as the uncomfortable truth – the requests or perspectives that make us - uncomfortable. During Lent our prayer, fasting, reading and reflection can often uncover some uncomfortable truths, if we are honest with ourselves. And that may explain in part why many of us are reluctant to do these things very much. Most of us want to hear what we want to hear, the pleasant things – the comfortable things. Why not? We're human after all.

"Psychologists label this phenomenon "confirmation bias," the tendency to seek out or believe what we already believe to be true, (rather) than words that challenge us. (And) we want people to agree with us.

In Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale "The Emperor's New Clothes," the emperor wanted everyone to tell him how stylish and exquisite his new clothes were. But he was naked! Duped by a con artist. And nobody would tell him the uncomfortable truth, except for one little girl. 'He's not wearing any clothes!' she exclaimed."

So maybe it is more than being afraid that God will ask us to DO something we really don't want to do. Maybe we don't want to do those things in Lent that we ought to do, to listen to God, because we're afraid of finding out the uncomfortable truth about ourselves – our sins or our faults.

Which reminds me; have you heard about the little Catholic girl who confessed to the priest? "Father, I have sinned. I cannot stop looking

at myself every time I pass a mirror, and I keep telling myself how beautiful I am.” But the priest responded, “My dear, I have good news; yours is not a sin; it’s only a mistake.” Ouch – maybe too much truth.

Frederick Buechner in his book, *What is Sin?*, observes that sin, or our recognition/perception of our sin, tends to isolate us. Think about it: “Envy is sin because it pushes others away; haughtiness is a sin because it sets us apart from others.” Most of what is labeled as sin drives wedges between us, destroys our relationships, whether we feel ourselves to be unworthy or others feel that we are not worthy of the relationship. And few things are as uncomfortable as being cut off from others, being isolated.

The problem is that when we stop listening to God because we are afraid we will discover something about ourselves that we don’t want to know, or because we are afraid that we will be asked to do something we don’t want to do, we are also cut off from hearing the good news – for example, that God loves us! In our isolation then, we don’t hear that God doesn’t care about our sin; that God wants a relationship with us no matter who we are or what we have done. And that God wants us to have a relationship with each other in that same way – love, not judgment and blame, no matter whether it is directed towards ourselves or to others. So, during this Lent try to let go of any judgment and blame, and like God, replace it with love.

It’s not always easy, but God is always with us, like he was with Moses, during his time in Egypt and the journey that followed. And the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the same God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, will help us. Yes, at times, God will ask us to do things that are difficult – that we don’t want to do; at times, God will reveal things about us that we do not want to face or acknowledge, but mostly God will reveal to us God’s love, grace and forgiveness. That is the comfortable truth and the good news for today.

Let me close with a prayer by St. Benedict of Nursia:

Gracious and Holy Father,
give us the wisdom to discover You,
the intellect to comprehend You,
the diligence to look for You,
the patience to wait for You,
the eyes to see You,
a heart to contemplate You,

and a life to proclaim You,
through the power of the Spirit
of Jesus, our Lord.

Amen