

Blessed by the favour of Him who dwells in the bush

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 January 2019

Preacher: Rev Donald A Macdonald

[0 : 00] Let us now turn to the passage that we read, Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 33. And we may read at verse 13, And of Joseph he said, Blessed by the Lord be his land, with the chices gifts of heaven above and of the deep that crouches beneath, with the chices fruits of the sun and the rich yield of the months, the finest produce of the ancient mountains and the abundance of the everlasting hills, with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness, and the favor of him that dwells in the bush.

May these rest on the head of Joseph, on the pate of him who is prince among his brothers. Blessed by the Lord be Joseph, with the favor of him that dwells in the bush.

At the beginning, or close to the beginning of another new year in our lives, I am sure that we have already reached one another with the customary greeting of a happy new year.

It seems to me that the words of our text this evening are suited to us all. May we be blessed by the favor of him that dwells in the bush.

At a cursory glance, it may seem a strange wish to be blessed by someone who dwells in a bush.

[1 : 52] As if the wish to be blessed is a desire to be blessed by a homeless person. Someone who dwells in a bush may suggest to a fertile imagination, a picture of a disheveled, unwashed person, like the person referred to recently in the children's address as Johnny Cornflakes.

But there is no similarity whatsoever. Remember these are the words of Moses. There is parting words.

As the aged leader bids farewell to the people of Israel. He is coming to the end of his rest in this life.

Eternity beckons. The time of his departure is at hand. His blessing of the tribes could be compared to that of Isaac and of Jacob.

Remember how Jacob practiced deception to obtain the blessing when he approached his father Isaac. And you remember how he obtained it through deceit and how that could not be annulled.

[3 : 21] It could also be compared to Jacob himself blessing his own family prior to his death.

Where Jacob called his sons together and said, Gather yourselves together that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come.

And so when Jacob was blessing his sons, there is an element of prophecy in what he states. Here then is Moses blessing a people whom he has led for a period of forty years.

Many unborn when he commenced his duties at the instigation of the Lord himself. And so we read at the beginning of the chapter, This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the people of Israel before his death.

It's worth noting how he is described. Moses the man of God. What a suggestive description.

Moses the man of God. It is a title that is frequently used in the Bible of a prophet.

[4 : 45] You find this title, Moses the man of God, used in the title of Psalm 90, Prayer of Moses, the man of God.

A psalm that is a somber reflection on human mortality, the sinful nature of man, the brevity of life, and the quiet confidence in God, who is alone the steadfast hope of the righteous.

You also find him designated Moses the servant of the Lord, God himself calling him, Moses my servant.

Few people have had as strong a sense of the greatness and eternal grandeur of God as Moses did.

For Moses knew God intimately. He conversed with him face to face, as we are reminded in the book of Numbers.

[5 : 53] Chapter 12, Hear my words, says the Lord, if there is a prophet among you. I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision. I speak with him in a dream.

Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles.

And for behold, and he beholds, the form of the Lord. What an accolade then, to be accorded by the Lord himself, the man or the servant of God.

You will remember from your own Bible reading how at his birth he was viewed as a special child, how because of the decree issued by Pharaoh, which resulted in putting to death male children, he was hidden for three months, and then placed in a watertight container, placed among the weeds by the river bank, where his crying attracted the attention of Pharaoh's daughter.

How he was raised as her son, and named Moses because he was drawn out of the water. You will also remember how he was forced to flee because he killed an Egyptian, and for forty years he lived separated from his own people, a shepherd in Midian.

[7 : 34] There he married, there he became a father. There he worked as a shepherd, looking after the flocks of his father-in-law, shepherding them in the wilderness.

You might be inclined to think that these were wasted years. In my view, they were not wasted years. They were years of preparation for the work that God had for him.

It may be that during these years that Moses asked many questions as to how God might use them and so on.

We don't know. And so now in this chapter, at the close of his life, he is speaking these words to a people to whom he had been a source of blessing many, many times.

He had nursed them as a father. He had, as it were, cradled them in his obvious care for them. He had even stood between them and the wrath of God.

[8 : 43] And so God used this man to show his wonders. In the words of the psalmist, Psalm 78, God performed wonders in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zohar.

Wonders that were done largely through the medium of this man. This man of God was one of whom the New Testament speaks in glowing terms, one who belongs to the hall of faith recorded for us in Hebrews 11.

By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin, he considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

And here in our text, he speaks of the blessing of the favor of him who dwells in the bush. Just two thoughts. First, the occupant in an unusual residence.

And secondly, the optimum blessing. First, an occupant in an unusual residence. What does he mean, the one who dwells in the bush?

[10 : 08] As I said, at the outside, it brings strange images to your mind. But you will remember from your Bible reading how we are told in the book of Exodus of the calling of Moses to his life walk.

And there you find recorded the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. Moses was confronted by this peculiar phenomenon when he was attending to the flock as a shepherd.

And as everyone knows, fire is extremely dangerous, and particularly in an arid area. We have seen that often on our TV screens in places like Australia, California, not so long ago, a whole town reduced to ashes by fire.

For a shepherd dependent on vegetation for feeding his flock, fire was a huge hazard unto be feared.

But what was so intriguing about this fire and drew the attention even more of the shepherd Moses was the fact that although the bush was on fire, it was not been burnt.

[11 : 40] it was evident that this was no ordinary fire. It had the appearance of real fire. It was real fire, but the bush remained unharmed.

And Moses went closer to examine and inspect this phenomenon. And he was addressed from the bush.

he heard a voice in a language he could understand. God called him out of the bush, Moses, Moses.

Then he said, Do not come near. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. Note what is written in the book of Exodus.

The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses, but God called to Moses. The angel of the Lord and God are used interchangeably in that context.

[12:49] They are both one and the same. We have a similar example recorded earlier in the book of Genesis where Abraham was offering Isaac on Mount Moriah.

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven. Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.

And again the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, By myself I have sworn declares the Lord, I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply your offspring, the stars of heaven as the sand that is on the seashore.

Here then we have a theophany, a visible manifestation of deity. Some would contend that it was a revelation of the second person foreshadowing the incarnation.

Sometimes the angel of the Lord appeared as a man, we know that from the Old Testament. But why does Moses speak in this way of God?

[14:08] Was he remembering as he invoked the blessing of God on Joseph, and Joseph of course was the name for the two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Was he remembering as he invoked blessing on these two tribes, his own calling to be a leader, and is coming face to face with God in the bush?

This was not his conversion, for I believe he already had fellowship with God. But we do not ever read that he had such a visible manifestation of God before now.

And this happened when he was on the west side of the wilderness at Horeb, the mountain of God. It obviously made an indelible impression on Moses.

You can understand that. So that after all these years he recalls this face to face encounter with God.

[15:22] could I suggest that he is not unique in remembering where the Lord met with him at significant moments in life.

Do you too not remember places where the Lord met with you? Places where the presence of the Holy Spirit of God was so real?

Whether it was at the time of your conversing and you saw God's way of salvation in Christ alone or subsequently either in a sermon or in fellowship with the Lord's people or in the secret place and you revisit such places in your mind.

You were no doubt like Jacob of old that at these times the Lord was in this place. So let me ask you again do you revisit such places in your own mind and in your own heart?

Places where the presence of the Lord was very real to you. Places perhaps where the zeal of your first love burned so fervently and the revelation of Christ in the truth was so overwhelming.

[16:47] now I'm not at all surprised that Moses called his God him who dwells in the bush.

It was such an astonishing and overwhelming and perhaps even unexpected meeting for the lonely shepherd in the wilderness. It was a strange place for the creator of the universe to indwell.

a bush in the desert. A hitherto insignificant bush in the wilderness a thorny bush. Nothing particularly attractive about the bush yet God was in the bush.

He didn't dwell in the stately cedars of Lebanon and big trees but a lowly insignificant thorny desert bush.

and I'd like to suggest this as being a source of encouragement to every believer. You may see yourself as being like the bush full of thorns full of failings as being of no significance without attraction with absolutely no merit.

[18:06] And you know what? You don't have any and neither do I. you. You are just an ugly sinner and yet God the Holy Spirit indwells the lives of such people.

For thus says the one who is high and lifted up says the prophet Isaiah who inhabits eternity whose name is holy I dwell in the high and holy place and also with him who is of our contrite and lowly spirit.

how amazing that God should indwell such lives. This is the one he says says God through the prophet Isaiah again to whom I will look the one to he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

The fire doesn't dwell then in the stately cedars and remember what Paul writes about those who are called by God. it's not according to human perceptions.

Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful not many were of noble birth but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

[19 : 25] God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world even things that are not to bring to nothing things so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

So even if you view yourself tonight as being poor weak so terribly unworthy do not be discouraged who showed you these things but he who dwells in the bush.

Do not be discouraged. What more can we say about this argument? Well the bush was filled with fire. The bush was burning yet it was not consumed. Some are of the view that the bush is an illustration of the people of Israel in their current desperate need solely oppressed at that particular time yet God is with them as a people and that then is applied to the New Testament era to the church oppressed in the world but not totally consumed because God is in his church and you remember how we have the the the logo the burning bush logo with the Latin words and it was not consumed is the literal translation now that is one application of the bush but in my own mind I'm not entirely convinced that that is the primary sense of the bush the fire in the bush seems to focus our attention on the character of the one who reveals himself and who says of himself

I am who I am one writer puts it like this and I liked what he said the fire that did not burn out is the emblem of the divine nature which does not tend to death because it lives nor to exhaustion because it energizes nor to emptiness because it bestows but after all times is the same lives by its own energy and is independent you know we say ourselves I am what I have become I'm not what I was nor am I what I will yet be but what God says in contrast is I am who I am the eternal ever living self sufficient absolute independent unwearied inexhaustible God is the God whose favor is as inexhaustible as himself and eternal as his own being therefore in the words of the psalmist the children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of his wings fire symbolic of the holiness of God that which sets him apart from all his creatures and I think that is further emphasized by what the Lord says to Moses with regard to the area around the bush put off your shoes from off your feet for the place on which you are standing is holy ground there was nothing special about that ground before then until the presence of the Lord was there but because the Lord was there the place was designated holy by his very presence what more we are told in this revelation of him that dwells in the bush is that he is a covenant keeping God that is how he speaks of himself I am the God of your father the God of Abraham the God of Isaac the God of Jacob I am the God of your father he is reminding Moses that he belongs to a covenant people and that he shares in the blessings of a covenant people but these people are not abundant by God and death but they are kept alive that he may be their

[23 : 49] God forever it is a relationship which cannot be broken by even death itself and as the psalmist puts it for God the Lord who is our God forever will abide he is our God forever more and to the end our guide he was a covenant keeping God he was a holy God he is a holy God and he is there in the bush for a purpose he is there to express his way of deliverance for his people I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt I have heard their cry because of their I know their sufferings I have come down to deliver them a great powerful compassionate God the holy God that's the one who dwells in the bush and the optimum blessing and I'm just going to mention it briefly because I understand there's a wake in the church next door that

Joseph may be blessed with the favor of him who dwells in the bush note Moses was desirous that Joseph or Manasseh and Ephraim enjoy many blessings blessed by the Lord be Israel with the choicest gifts of heaven above and the deep that crouches beneath with the choicest fruits of the sun and the rich yield of the months with the finest produce of the ancient mountains and the abundance of the everlasting hills with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness all of which in their own right were fantastic blessings but this is the optimum blessing the greatest of all blessings to enjoy the favor of him who dwells in the bush to enjoy the favor of a covenant keeping God the word translated favor in other versions can be translated as goodwill it always carries with it a certain intensity and warmth of feeling it is more than goodwill it is more than favor perhaps delight or

pleasure would be nearer the meaning of the word and when you enjoy the favor of this dweller of the bush then you are enjoying it throughout your

Christian life because it is the fountain of every blessing I would contend as elect people for example as Paul writes in the letter to Ephesians he predestined us for adoption of sons through Christ Jesus and the basis for this is according to the purpose of his will or as might be translated in accordance with his pleasure and will it is out of the good will of God that we are predestined to be his people doesn't just signify simply the purpose of God but the delight that he takes in his plans and in fulfilling his plans it has warm and personal connotation and it draws attention to God's willingness and joy to do good redemption arises from the pleasure of his will what but the pleasure of God could gift unworthy undeserving sinners to his son our calling to newness of life is rooted in his pleasure our preservation in life our growth in life and all the blessings associated with it with which

God leads us to make it such a blessed life they are the fruit of the pleasure of his will you cannot find any blessing that we receive coming to us by way of merit on our part so it is an important blessing that Moses is seeking here then you find in the book of Psalms you bless the righteous oh lord you cover him with favor as with a shield the same word and the example of this covering is to provide security you remember when David was being pursued by a hostile force led by Saul and they were in hot pursuit of David and at the last moment Saul is deflected as Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them a messenger came to Saul saying hurry and come for the Philistines and made a way against the land so

Saul returned from pursuing after David and went against the Philistines so you can see how the favor of the Lord acted as a cover acted as protection and security for David in that situation and that is what the surely Moses is asking for Ephraim and Manasseh and what we are to seek when we are looking for the favor of him who dwells in the bush eternal security and protection from all that would seek our will and then again the psalmist says by your favor O Lord you made my mountain stand strong in other words you made me brave you made me stand firm against every kind of opposition that

[29 : 38] I encountered in life you made my mountain stand strong in other words you made me able to withstand not because of any power within myself but because you are at my right hand then I shall not be shaken and then again blessed are the people who know the festal shout for you are the glory of their strength for by your favor I there's the word again by your favor our horn is exalted it's not just a mark of victory but of joy of going forth with joy I think perhaps the best way that I can illustrate it is to keep a sunny face to the world because you enjoy the favor of the Lord it reminds me of an old woman I knew when I was a young believer and

I knew she had very little of this world's goods but I never saw her crestfallen she always kept a sunny face I know she had plenty to be anxious about plenty to worry about but she kept a sunny face on the outside and she hid her anxieties and worries and I believe she took them to the Lord alone and voiced these anxieties in his presence and it's because she enjoyed the favor of the Lord that she did that so just one other comment a covenant keeping God could that not be one of the most comforting and rich wells ever dug by God an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and secure is a source of comfort to David on his deathbed it has been a source of comfort to many of God's Davids in the bunker field of life and should we not too covet the favor promised in Christ so that if we too enjoy this favor in our lives then we shall know that the Lord takes pleasure in his saints who worship him in fear and those who trust his steadfast love will always find him near let us pray eternally