

Shepherds and the Good Shepherd (2) Moses



Whilst preparing this series of Advent meditations, I have been struck by the parallels between the story of Jacob and that of Moses. Both men had to flee for their lives; Jacob from his angry brother, Esau, and Moses from the head of his adoptive family, Pharaoh. They both met their future wives by wells, when the young women brought their father's flocks to drink. And both of them spent time caring for the sheep belonging to their fathers-in-law.

In the Book of Exodus, chapter 3, we learn that it was while he was watching over the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, that Moses saw the burning bush that was not consumed by the flames. He went to investigate and heard the voice of God calling him to bring Jacob's descendants, the Children of Israel, out of slavery in Egypt.

In the years that followed, as Moses led the wayward Israelites in the wilderness, I wonder how much he was influenced by his earlier experience as a shepherd. Sheep need to be led to places of safety where they can find food and water. They need to be brought back when they stray and to be rescued when they get themselves into danger. They need tending when they fall sick. All this calls for patience, compassion and commitment on the part of the shepherd, virtues we see clearly displayed by Moses towards the people in his charge.

God calls leaders to be shepherds; to protect, care and provide for those they serve. We need to pray for those who lead us, in our church, our nation and our world, that they may be directed by the Holy Spirit as they seek to direct others.

A prayer:

Searched for, Christ comes.

To the wise and powerful, star-led to Bethlehem, seeking a king, He comes, child of Mary, crowned with meekness, worthy of every gift.

Loving God, we pray for the leaders of the world. Guide them with your light to the true wisdom of justice and peace, of freedom and respect for every human life.

Lord, come to your people. In your mercy set us free. AMEN

(From the Methodist Worship Book, Holy Communion for Christmas and Epiphany)

- Rev John Barnett

Image: Shepherd in Jordan (photo Pete Wildman)