

3rd Sunday of Lent – Exc 3, 1st Cor 10, Luke 13:1-9

Peter Kreeft points out that today's passage from Exodus is the holiest passage in Scripture for a religious Jew, because it contains the single profoundest and holiest word ever spoken, a word that is so holy that no Jew will ever speak it. "I am who am...This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you."

[The word is literally translated as the two English words "**I Am.**" The Hebrews did not use vowels in their words. I know it sounds strange, but it certainly saved lots of ink, at the expense of some uncertainty. So, the consonants that spell out God's name are simply: Y-H-V-H, where the good Jew would add the vowels sounds from their word "Adonai" which means "Lord" to help them remember to say that word instead. Unfortunately, non Jewish translators literally made up the word Jehovah as what they thought was the closest meaning or sound. Since they were German Scholars the consonant "J" was used for their "Y" sound. Hence, the bogus word "Jahovah."]

"The name is so sacred that God says to Moses, 'Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.' What is holy is not the ground itself, the geographical place, but **what is spoken there by God to Moses**, and through him, to all the Jews, and through them, to all humankind."

The name, 'I am,' is the most difficult to understand. Simply put, we have a God who is present, not past or future. Certainly, God is also in the past and will be in the future, but to God that doesn't matter since all of time is still present to God. How can God be present at all times, neither more nor less but especially in the present? The easy answer is simply because God is God and time is not a restriction for God. That is Good News for us since that means God is always present to us and God's presence to us will not end even with death, since that is the reward for those who love God, to live forever with God where time would make no sense for someone who will live **forever**.

We experience the notion that time flies when one is having fun, or waiting in line for something important, like your meal, or to see the doctor, etc. And when one is in love, then time seems to stand still. Basically, this **time standing still** is what happens in the Eucharist...at the consecration, "Do this in memory of me." We remember, we celebrate, we believe. This is the moment in the celebration of the Eucharist where it is most appropriate to worship the Lord, "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again." Christ yesterday, today, and tomorrow! Time ends at this moment where Jesus

is united on our altar with us and with the **Great I Am!** We are all part of that timeless union, the sheep and the goats, the good and the bad.

Today's gospel in Luke brings us back to the **sacred ground**. "Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the **ground** around it and fertilize it that it may bear fruit in the future. If not, you can cut it down."

In Catholic Woman Preach, Kristin Heyer writes, "Jesus offers the parable in response to his disciples' questions about the severity of different Galileans' sins. So, whereas today's gospel demands we bear fruit, it also warns against self-righteousness. Sometimes we are more concerned with calling others out than imitating the mercy God shows us again and again. Why should they exhaust the soil? Yet responding to God's prophetic call in Exodus often requires the mercy and patience God shows in Luke's gospel—we are called not only to resist empire and release the captives, but also to bridge-building and forgiveness." And Kristin ends, "God of one more year, I Am Who Am, you call us to liberating solidarity with those considered "outsiders" in our midst. Together we are standing on **Holy Ground.**"

And we are standing on Holy Ground in the presence of the God who is always present in this moment, with the people, in the Word, with the Body and Blood of Jesus within us, in this present time and always, and forever. That is why Lent prepares us again to celebrate at the Easter Vigil that timeless moment when Jesus Has Risen, especially what that means for us, our own resurrection where **time will stop** for those who love God but be **endless** for those who have failed to love God through our brothers and sisters.

The invitation continues now with each moment we say yes in the present, through our love of God and neighbor.