

- Over the last few weeks and months in our reading from the Book of Genesis and now from the Book of Exodus we have been telling the ancestral story of the people of Israel.
- So we have heard the stories of Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah and Rachel and, most recently, Joseph, and how the people of Israel came to be in the land of Egypt.
- And this story is a story of movement across time and space:
 - across the generations from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt.
- But it is also a story that portrays a different kind of movement as well:
 - a movement from barrenness, futility and despair to abundance, possibility, and hope.
- At the beginning of this story we know that Sarah is barren and that she and Abraham are the end of the line for their family.
 - They are facing a dead end:
 - no future, no posterity,
- Yet, God calls them into a new time and a new place,
 - a new future with the promise of children and the promise of both posterity and possibility.
- And this movement from barrenness and abundance is a theme that repeats,
 - not only in the subsequent lives of Rebekah and Rachel as well, but also in the land itself.
- Because as the story tells us, a famine comes to the land in the time of Joseph.
 - Food and provision are scarce and the future looks devoid of hope and possibility.
- Yet through Joseph and the provision he makes, a future becomes possible again for the people of Israel and they experience abundance and fruitfulness again.
- And this is the pattern of God’s activity in the life of the people of Israel and in our own lives.
- God calls us out of times and places and situations of barrenness, futility, and despair into times and places and situations of abundance, possibility and hope.
- God calls us out of whatever dead ends we may find ourselves in and holds before us the promise of a new future.
- And so it is that we take up our story again today.
- As we heard last week, a new king has arisen in Egypt and he perceives the growing Hebrew population in Egypt as a threat to the security of his land and his people and his rule.

- So he subjects them to hard labour and embarks on a policy of male infanticide, killing their newborn sons.
- And it is into this brutal reality that Moses is born.
 - He comes into the world in a time and a place of danger.
- His is a secret and hidden birth and yet he experiences this remarkable and miraculous escape from death.
- Through the love and ingenuity of his mother, who hides him in a waterproof basket in the reeds on the bank of the Nile, he is taken into the care of none other than Pharaoh's daughter and he grows up to become her adopted son.
- Despite this miraculous escape, however, it seems that death still stalks Moses.
- He intervenes to save a fellow Israelite from a beating at the hands of an Egyptian overseer and ends up killing the overseer.
 - So he becomes a wanted man and flees from Pharaoh into the land of Midian.
- And in this moment, like Abraham and Sarah before him, he is a person without a future.
 - He is a refugee member of an oppressed people.
- Yet, as we hear today, God calls him into a new future in the same way that God called Abraham and Sarah into a new future.
 - God calls Moses into a future that he can neither imagine nor accomplish for himself.
- And that, if you like, is precisely the point of this story.
- Moses cannot imagine this future to which God is calling him.
- He cannot imagine fronting up to Pharaoh and demanding the release of his people.
- He feels keenly his lack of status and his lack of experience.
 - "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the people of Israel out of Egypt?
 - "What should I say to the Israelites when they ask me who is this God who has sent you to us?"
- But what God says to Moses in the first instance is,
 - "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob".
- And in speaking to Moses in this way, God is saying two things.
- First, God is saying that I am the God who was present to your family before you and I am the God who was present to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all who have gone before you.
 - To all those people who have preceded him, in each generation in its own circumstances and particularity, God was present and real.

- But more than that, in those words, God is reminding Moses that the God who speaks to him now is the same God who called Abraham and Sarah out of the despair and futility of barrenness,
 - the same God who led Jacob and his family out of the despair and futility of famine.
- I am the God who was present to your father before you
 - and I am the God who was present to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and every generation in between,
 - and I am the God who redeemed them.
 - And I am the God who will redeem you,
 - because I am a God who saves.
- I am a God who saves.
 - I will be with you.
 - And I will be with you in a way that calls you beyond what you can do alone.
- Moses says,
 - “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the people of Israel out of Egypt?”
- And God’s answer to that is to say,
 - You are the person with whom I am present.
 - You are not alone.
 - I am with you.
- And perhaps Moses’ question is our own question
 - Who are we to do anything by our own power and capacity?
 - Who are we to face disappointment and disillusionment?
 - Who are we to face sickness and death?
 - Who are we to live with grief and despair?
 - Who are we to work and hope for peace and justice in our communities and in our world?
- And God gives us the same answer that God gave Moses:
 - You are the people with whom I am present.
 - You are not alone.
 - I am with you.
 - And I am a God who saves.
- We do what we do because God is with us.
- We do not face the world with all its challenges and heartaches in our own strength.
- We face the world because God is with us.
- We face the world with God because just as God called our ancestors out of barrenness, futility and despair and into a new future of hope, freedom and possibility, so the same God

calls us out of whatever dead ends we may find ourselves in and holds before us the promise of a new future.

- God is with us.
 - We are not alone.
 - Thanks be to God.