



22 OCTOBER 2023

Welcome to church this morning,
we hope you enjoy being with us.

Lectionary Readings

This week 22 October, 2023

Exodus 33:12-23
Psalm 99
1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
Matthew 22:15-22

Next week 29 October, 2023

Deuteronomy 34:1-12
Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17
1 Thessalonians 2:1-8
Matthew 22:34-46

Worship next Sunday

Next Sunday 29 October, we will be having a slightly different style of worship. We will be sitting in table groups and watching a short video on Celebrating what's right about the world. We will also be celebrating Holy Communion.



Life's Journey

*On the Journey
there may be some steep hills to climb,
or some times when the road seems
treacherous and you aren't sure which
turn to take...
or times when you feel like you are on
the brink of falling,
or there may be many curves in the
road.*

*As you make your way through the ups
and downs of life,
may you experience God's Presence
with you through each tunnel,
every steep climb, every curve;
in the beautiful mountaintop
experiences with Him,
and through the slippery storms of life.*

*The Lord will walk with you
down through the valleys and
up the mountains,
take your hand and guide you through
to the light,
put a hedge around you to keep you
safe,
help you to find joy and excitement in
the roller coaster ride,
and fill you with amazement at the
beauty He provides along the way.*

*Take time to smell the flowers,
and to admire His handiwork
along life's railway.
Life is the Journey
that gets us to our heavenly
destination.*

*So, enjoy the journey!
And may His love flood over you,
fill you and overflow in praise to Him,
for all He's done, does and will do!*

*Live Simply!
Love Generously!
Care Deeply!
Speak Kindly!*



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Theological Tensions within the Holy Scriptures

Last Sunday we examined Exodus 32 as an example of a text full of Theological Tension. This occurs when we read a verse about God acting in ways that appear to contradict the image of God revealed within other biblical texts. The following approaches to dealing with Theological Tension are based in my training and formation in the Uniting Church. Our Church is founded on the belief that we have received the books of the Old and New Testaments as unique prophetic and apostolic testimony, in which the church **hears** the Word of God and by which its faith and obedience are nourished and regulated. (Basis of Union Section 5 the Biblical Witness).

If you or someone you know is grounded in a belief that every word of scripture is the 'literal' word of God, rather than a collection of books in which we '**hear**' the word of God, the following approaches may not make any sense.

The first approach is to consider who a book or text was written for and the audience's circumstances. We know that the Exodus legends were handed down across many generations and finally recorded by well-educated Israelites held as captives in Babylon after the Kingdom of Israel had been destroyed. God's people needed to make sense of this predicament, had God abandoned them in Exile? No! God must be punishing them, just as God had punished their ancestors centuries ago in the Exodus desert wanderings. Had God abandoned them? No! God was still with them even in Exile and God's great plan and promise to make them a nation that would bring light to all people was still in progress. Today we no longer consider misfortune as divine punishment because Jesus tells us that good and bad things happen to good and bad people alike (Matthew 5:45).

The second approach is to appreciate the Bible as a collection of voices, voices just like ours, that seek to know God. Within and throughout this collection of apostolic and prophetic voices, the author's own views and perspectives occasionally colour the text. From time to time the authors also anthropomorphise God.

(anthropomorphism: the attribution of human characteristics or behaviour to a god, animal, or object). In Exodus 32: 10 God certainly sounds a lot like an angry, betrayed lover, who lashes out with an emotional outburst when he tells Moses to "leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

Thirdly, sitting within the Theological Tension can lead us to consider what God may actually be doing in the above exchange with Moses. Moses has been offered the position as the second Abraham, yet what does he do, he denies himself this greatest of honours and pleads for his 'stiff-necked' broken people. Is God testing Moses here? Who does Moses' self-sacrifice remind you of? We know that God does relent and spare the Israelites after listening to Moses' argument.

This story shows us that we worship a living God, a God who listens and responds to us, a God who is actively involved in the world rather than a cold and lifeless, unknowable entity.

Theological tension is not readily resolved, there are no definitive answers, however my personal approach is to always seek the living God in the One who came to make peace with us, God's own true image, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15).

- Rev Gail