

If a barren fig tree can be given another chance, there is hope for all of us. If a very ordinary bush in the middle of nowhere can burn with God's light then perhaps all ground is holy. These are ways of seeing but our sight is readily impaired by sin, that is by a willingness to believe what is not true, to what is not there, to follow ideas, opinions, prejudices which are imposed on reality, rather than letting the reality itself speak truth to us, reveal itself as 'I am'. To see reality in this light and burning with God's glory, iridescent with truth, requires emptiness on our part, a willingness to be surprised, an awareness that we are not after all the centre of the world and the arbiter of its fortunes – in short we need humility, paradoxically an awareness of our ordinariness in order to be surprised by extraordinariness, and even more surprised that this extraordinariness pertains to all things, including all those other mortals we might have thought ourselves superior to, in some way more gifted, more favoured by God. Susan McCaslim sees the monk Thomas Merton in this light

*'The way he makes a gift of his own fragility gives us hope that each of us, with our own finitudes, flaws and failures, may also touch holy ground. He is not removed from us, but a brother. When we read him, we are invited to linger at this 'no place' [point vierge or point of nothingness] where we don't know exactly who we are, where we're going or our final destination – only that we are always here, always now, always interconnected.'* (p47 'We are already one')

Moses then as the ideal candidate for revealing God to his people because, in the part missing from today's text, he questions his suitability (as Isaiah, and Jeremiah will also do later)

*'Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'*

'Who am I to stand here and talk to you of God?' – the last person to be doing so. But God is God – both creator and redeemer, *'I am with you'* God says and what we thought of as impossible for us becomes possible in God or, in words referring to the monk Thomas Merton once again and his desert predecessors of the fourth century,

*'they were called to preserve human values as well as to bear their uncompromising witness to the absolute nature of the demands of God. To find God they tell us that we must leave all things.... But having found God we find that in him all things are given back to us. The world, which in one sense represents human society closed to God's action, in another sense is seen as his creation, full of hints and glimpses of his glory.'*

(Cistercian Studies vol 11 no 2 1976)

So what Jesus is warning his Jewish contemporaries of and what Paul is warning the Christians of Corinth of is the tendency of any religious body to settle into a state of presumption, God is with us and not with anyone else. No, God is God, *I am who I am* – and what we are derives entirely from that.

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