

There have been many church renewals and revivals and restorations of faith throughout history. Indeed, our reading today is an illustration of one such event. It does, however, raise a question for me and that is; 'What is the difference between a renewal, a revival and a restoration?'

The Wesley brothers experienced a resurgence of life in the church with their open air meetings [open air because the Church didn't like what they preached and refused them pulpit room]. Then there was the Kendal revival, the Welsh revival etc. and don't forget the Toronto Blessing.

What do these, and similar sudden church growth events, in the New Testament particularly, have in common?

The answer, as our reading tells us, is time with God in prayer.

Prayer by itself is not enough however. Honesty and humility are also needed for God works best with a broken hearted people and not with a 'stiff necked people' [see Ex 33:3, 5-6 e.g.]

The Patriarchs of the Old Testament were used by God but they were not perfect people. They usually, at some point, got above themselves and had to be broken to be renewed, or remade.

It is good to be reminded that God can and does use anybody to fulfil His plans. Which would you rather be; perfect in your own sight or remade in God's image?

### **Read Exodus 33:1-23**

1. Among the Israelites freed from slavery in Egypt there was a conflict of cultures with some already missing the 'cucumbers' of Egypt against the promise of 'milk and honey'. Try to put yourself in the sandals of an ordinary Israelite at that time. Which would you support, the absent Moses up the fiery mountain or those wanting some immediate direction?

2. Have you been part of a church revival? Did you see people come to faith or change? Some may remember Beulah's own spiritual renewal [1970'S]. How was the spiritual temperature different to today? Why do moves of God often see people come to faith? What do you think changes in Christians to share the gospel more readily during these times? Acts 4:29-31

3. The Israelites had used the gold [earrings?] taken from Egypt to build the golden calf which either 'came out of the fire' or which Aaron shaped [compare 32:4 with 32:24]. Why did Aaron lie? In what ways do we seek to conceal truths from God? Why would God not know already? Are we still a 'stiff necked people'?

4. The not wearing of ornaments by the Israelites may be seen as a sign of atonement, of humility. What do you think? Who actually told the Israelites to remove their ornaments? Why?

5. Notice the similarities between verses 7-10 and a modern church setting. Apart from the tents, unless you are at New Wine or a similar camp, what is the same and what is different. Which are the important things? What is important in gatherings today?

6. Verse 11 tells us that God and Moses spoke together as friend, 'face to face'. Verses 20 and 23 say that God's face 'must not be seen' [this is repeated elsewhere in the Old Testament]. Some would call that a contradiction and then say 'therefore the whole Bible is wrong'. Why is it not a contradiction and how would you explain that? How can we develop a close relationship with the Lord? What often hinders us?

7. How does verse 18 read to you? Reflect on that for a moment and then consider all the times we have been guilty of telling God what to do whilst, perhaps, wrapping it up like a prayer? Ever wonder why some prayers seem to go unanswered? Or is the silence, in fact, the answer?

## Prayer Points

Pray for the community meals and the Ukrainian hub. Pray for those who attend, who we serve and especially for the volunteers that make Wednesdays special.

Pray for peace in Cabo Delgado Province, Mozambique, where an Islamist group has been killing people since 2017 and many people have been displaced from their homes.

## Sermon Notes

### 1. Tent of meeting

### 2. Glorious Presence



# BIBLE STUDY

September 24<sup>th</sup> 2023

## The King and the Kingdom: Kingdom Prayer.

**Exodus 33:1-23**

Culture is the stories we tell that express meaning and make sense of the world.' The kingdom of God is a *story*, traceable through the pages of the biblical canon from Adam to Christ and a future hope. The church is *not* the kingdom in its fullness, the church is a manifestation of the kingdom, or an outpost of the kingdom. As the church follows the King, we create spaces that look, behave, believe and reorder like the kingdom. What does Kingdom culture look like today? How do we live as people who follow Christ Jesus the King, demonstrating the power of gospel and the life of the Spirit?

If you would like to join a Connect Group, please contact the church office 01424 730001