
Exodus 33:1-6, 12-17, God has to travel with us

Hebrews 12:1-4

Focusing on verse 15: Then Moses said to him [God], 'If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. In other words: If you, Lord, don't travel with us, let us please stay here.

Last week's passage ended on a cliff hanger: Israel had committed adultery, broken the brand-new covenant, and God was unwilling to continue travelling with her to the promised land. In this week's reading we see how Moses negotiates with God again, for more. He does not want to lead the people alone.

We see that in the end Moses' mediation achieves three things: 1. no destruction of the people; 2. permission to proceed on the journey; and 3. God's Presence on the journey.

In our passage 'God's Presence', with a capital P, means the LORD himself.

So in verse 15 Moses argues: It is better to be with God in the desert than without him in Kanaan. Better with God in a tent (or a refugee centre) than without him in a palace.

Better with God on an empty wallet than without him on a full bank account

What does this tell us about the people of God, the Church? Without God we would just be a football club, a historical society, a group of coffee / tea fans. Without God, we are just one of the many nice organisations in Knaphill. Without God, the congregation would be left with just a minister and deacons. God's presence makes all the difference! It's not our lifestyle, but our faith/attitude that distinguishes us. [Many non-believers have good lifestyles.]

What does this mean in practice?

1. It is a year ago that I led my first service for the church, on Zoom from London. When the contact developed quickly, and the church called us to the ministry, Hetty and I asked God to go with us. Without God we would not have come to Knaphill, however nice you are as a congregation. And now we are here, one with you, travelling together. Lord, go with us!
2. Do place God at the centre of your life. A good question still is: WWJD, What Would Jesus Do? If you want to undertake something, ask God to join you. Better still, consult God before you plan any projects. That's what the deacons did with Renew Wellbeing.
3. Believers are people who know their limits. We did not create the world, we happily admit our frailty and lean on God. It's okay not to be okay. In Christianity there is no need for a stiff upper lip.

Maybe it is a sign of strength to admit that you need God.
