

## Moses' Legacy: Deut 34. 1 – 12

### Ammerdown 2024

Every day newspapers print obituaries - describing the lives of well known people who have just died. Just over a hundred years ago, a man called Alfred opened up the morning paper and was shocked to discover his own obituary. Alfred's brother had died a few days before, but the paper accidentally printed Alfred's obituary instead of his brother's. He was horrified to see that the newspaper remembered him for his extreme wealth and the discovery that made him a wealthy man. Light bulb moment! He realised he didn't want to be remembered that way. So he decided to do something about it. He decided to dedicate the last years of his life to leaving an entirely different legacy.

When you die what are you going to leave behind you?

Today we are thinking about Moses and what was the result of his life.

Moses had humble beginnings in a godly family. But God turned him from a stuttering shepherd into a national leader and powerful speaker. His courage, humility and wisdom moulded the Hebrew slaves into a nation. Moses knew that it was no greatness in him that did it - their release from slavery, their escape from the Egyptians through the Red Sea, their safety and provision in the desert. Moses knew it was the greatness of the all-powerful God in whom he trusted.

Yet Deuteronomy says he was the greatest prophet; look at Deut 34. 10. *'Since then, no prophet has arisen in Israel like Moses.'* Here v.7, at the age of one hundred and twenty, still as fit as a fiddle. He didn't need to wear glasses as most of us oldies do. His strength hadn't gone. He could still climb high mountains. But, it was God's appointed time for him to die. His work was done. God didn't leave a grave that generations could visit and venerate. He left a land and a people.

This morning we're going to pick out some of the ways in which Moses left a legacy.

#### **First, Moses' left an example** (v.10, 11, 12)

Moses was unique. v.12, *'No-one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.'* Moses did miraculous things but, bottom line, he was a man of faith and obedience. v11, *'The Lord sent him'* to do these things and Moses obeyed God. He did what God told him. His heart wanted to be obedient and he was prepared to take risks. Time and time again he went to Pharaoh. Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not listen to him. But he kept doing as God asked.

And then he had the grumbling Israelites. They cried for water, for food, for meat because the manna was boring. They were frightened. They didn't trust God. They made a golden idol. And all the time, Moses showed how much he trusted God. He was an example to them. When the people

looked at Moses, they saw a man who was trusting God and was obedient to Him. **Moses was an example of faith and obedience.**

What do people see when they look at our lives? What sort of example are we? What do our children - and grandchildren - see when they look at us?

### **A man of fellowship with God**

They also saw a man who fellowshiped with God. v.10, *'whom the Lord knew face to face.'* When Moses went out to the tent of meeting, a pillar of cloud would come down. That cloud was God's presence. The people then knew that God was speaking with Moses. Moses' face was so radiant, shining, after being with the Lord. They couldn't look at him. So he put a veil over his face.

Are there some people who you have known in your life who just to be with them, you feel you have been with Jesus? Maybe your grandmother or a head teacher, a parent, a pastor? There's a kind of peace about them, and joy and hope. Can you think of someone who when you have an issue you think, 'That person would be wonderful to talk to.'?

Moses was a friend of God, talking face to face. What does it mean to know someone face to face? You know them, you understand them and they understand you. You're open and honest. When God reveals himself to Moses (Ex 34.6) on the top of Mount Sinai, he didn't show Moses a vision of his power, but rather his love. God describes himself as *compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love to thousands, forgiving wickedness.*

Jesus calls us 'his friends'. We are friends of God. God wants to reveal himself to us. 2 Cor 4.6 *For God who said, Let light shine out of darkness made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

What do you do when you are disappointed about something? Roger had his precious bike stolen this week. We were both so disappointed! What do you do? Some people get mad and blame God. Some people shrug their shoulders and get depressed or don't speak to anyone or they blame other people.

Moses was also an example of **a man who carried on despite disappointment.**

Moses had disobeyed God. When there was no water, Moses had struck the rock at Kadesh instead of just speaking as God had said. And God had said, *'You did not trust me enough to honour me as holy, so you won't lead the people into the land.'* What a huge disappointment for Moses! He often pleaded with God to let him go into the promised land. But God said 'No!' God didn't change his mind.

When we disobey, like Moses did, we can *turn away* in anger, resentment or embarrassment – or we can *turn to* him. We can receive his love and forgiveness, ask for his help to live a more godly life and to deal with the consequences of how we've messed up.

Despite his disappointment, Moses kept up his responsibility - to lead the people.

Moses was an example of a **man of vision**

I found out something fascinating. In the UK when we buy a house, there's a day of completion. The papers are finally signed. Even if you haven't stepped foot inside the house, it's now yours. Apparently, under Hebrew laws, the legal possession of property was only completed when it was *viewed*. So, in one of Jesus' parables a man says, 'I've just bought a house and *must go and view it*,' he was saying he needed to complete the deal.

Moses climbed Mt Nebo and the Lord showed him the whole land! Even though Moses was not allowed into the land, he was given the privilege of legally taking possession of the entire country on behalf of his people! We've been to Mt Nebo which is in Jordan. We didn't get a very good view because of the cloud. I said to Roger, 'I think God gave Moses a better view than this!' I reckon it was a spectacular day.

Imagine him standing there, looking at range upon range of mountains that was the Promised Land. Tears in his eyes, awe in his heart. He had led this people wandering in the desert for 40 years - and now, at last, they will enter the land. (Deut 34.2), *'The Lord showed him the whole land.'* And said, v4, ***'This is the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give to their descendants.'*** 'This is where my people are going to live.' He could imagine where all the tribes were going despite the battles ahead of them.

(Incidentally, eventually Moses did the land – on the Mount of Transfiguration.)

Here at St Marc's, you are about to appoint someone to be your full-time Chaplain. A few of you have responsibility to make that choice and we're all praying for God to direct. But what is the land that God is wanting to give St Marc's? As we look out at Grenoble, there are many people who are English-speakers and some of them God is working in. Some of them want to find meaning and purpose in their lives. Some of them want to know there is more to life than just get up and go to work. Some of them want to worship in English (like Amandine was telling us this week). Some of them want to find a Christian community that they can be a part of and serve in. Some of them want to come back to faith in Christ. What vision is God giving us here at St Marc's?

So, **Moses left an example - of faith and obedience, of knowing God face to face, of carrying on despite disappointment and of vision.**

**Secondly, Moses left a people and he left a new leader, Joshua.**

What do you want to leave from your life?

Over the past weeks many of us have been grieving with Philippe and Lillia the death of Pierre. Roger and I never met him but we know he was a man who left a huge legacy. The churches, the soldiers and groups he led and pastored. The young men and women whose lives he set an example to and mentored. His own children who honour him and follow in the way of Christ because he taught them.

Many of us have children or grandchildren. Sometimes they can be very wayward, going their own way.

Moses did not find leading the children of Israel easy. They were very difficult to lead. They complained and grumbled. They had their own strong opinions - and rebelled against God - like some of our children. But Moses loved them - and they knew it. When he died they grieved for him, v8. Moses' passion was to bring all of God's people, all the children of Israel, to love God with their whole heart, to trust God, to know that God was faithful, to obey God, to live God's way in their lives. He was passionate that the children God had given him to look after - these thousands of Israelites - would be a nation of faith.

Roger and I longed for our own children to know and follow Jesus. We are now praying for all our grandchildren to know and follow Jesus. We have 19! The oldest is only 11 years old. The youngest is 7 months old. Roger has already started to say to each one that they must marry a Christian, someone who really loves Jesus. He said that to Joshua who is 8. Joshie said that he didn't want to get married - typical little boy. Of course, we also want them to be happy and flourish - but we know that true flourishing comes when you put Jesus in the centre of your life.

What do you long for for your children and grandchildren, nieces, nephews, others who God has brought into your lives? We have a far bigger influence than we think we have.

Can I speak personally to parents now - of young children? Are you bringing your children up to know Jesus?

Roger and I were invited by a pastor to come and teach his church in Kaduna, Nigeria. We took a team. Roger and I stayed with a wonderful doctor. He invited us to join his family for prayers, very early in the morning. We got up very tired from our travels and joined them to read Scripture and pray. Later we met with our team. Every single one of them had been in a home where they met together to pray early before they went to work and school. God challenged us from the west to live a more sacrificial life. The Christians in Kaduna have to withstand persecution from the Moslems.

Can I ask you fathers - and mothers - are you leading your children to read the Scriptures and pray? Are you being an example of faith? Are you living a godly life? Are you bringing them to church regularly?

We lived in Edinburgh when our five children were small. Roger was leading a church which was growing very fast, so he got very tired. I said to him, 'Roger, you must give a lead. We must have prayer with the children before they go to school.' So we did. It wasn't easy, it didn't happen all the time, but we did it.

Can I say a word to those of us who are grandparents, or uncles or aunts? I know some of you are grieved because your own children or relations are not following the Lord. And you are praying for them. And God hears those prayers. We have met so many people who become Christians because their grandparents were praying for them! With our grandchildren, there is so much we can do to teach them about Jesus. There are wonderful Christian books we can buy and read with them and give to them. Give them a Christian book alongside their present at Christmas. And pray with them when you say goodnight. If they are sad about something, pray with them.

In our home, we always give thanks for the food, whoever is with us. Pray with people when they tell you their problems.

Moses trained up Joshua. He took him with him up the mountain. Joshua would stand guard outside the tent when Moses went in to speak with God. Joshua would have heard Moses pray to God. God gave Joshua to Moses. God will bring people to us who we can show the way of Jesus to.

What will our legacy be? What will be the result of our life?

Remember that story about Alfred? Remember Alfred, reading his own obituary? He did not want his legacy to be that he made a lot of money through the discovery of dynamite. So he came up with an idea. What if he left an endowment that rewarded people who worked for peace? Can you guess who it was? Alfred created a peace prize. Today we remember Alfred Nobel as the founder of the Nobel Peace prize.

Let's pray...