

March 7, 2021 by Lori C. Morton

Exodus 20 Job 37:1-5 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 John 2:13-22

Being Thunderstruck

The cover on the bulletin today, is an artist's rendition of what the Hebrews experienced while Moses was up on Mt. Sinai consulting with God.

They had been traveling for a while,
after God rescued them from Egypt and
destroyed Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea.

But, in the wilderness ... their Dark Wood, they struggled to live
into this salvation; be a community
trust God was still with them and for them.

So, God decided to equip the people and Moses
with some boundaries, instructions
until, they fully trusted God as their guide.

Yes, God made a covenant with the people, let them witness God' presence
in lightning and thunder, a great cloud
settling over Mt Sinai, so they would have no doubt
about what Moses returned to teach them.

God chose this way of making God's self known

because it was what the people would've recognized as how gods
speak to their people.

All the other cultures and religions of their time
described their gods' voice and the manner of gaining insight
from god; as be stuck by lightning.

Not literally, but like the lightbulb going off in our heads
Epiphanies, aha moments, sudden awareness
that could not have come from themselves.

Insights, only the divine could have helped them discover.¹

A moment like this, happened when I was working at a Lutheran Camp,
Rainbow Trail, in Colorado.

That summer, I was working as the office assistant.

The week had started off very rainy.

We finally had a break in the rain

and I needed to post something up at the staff lodge
probably assignments for teams for the following week.

¹ Elnes, Eric The Gifts of the Dark Wood (Abingdon Press, 2015) pg. 66-67

Grabbing the chance to run up the hill, without getting soaked
I grumbled under my breath because I was so far behind
and the list of to-dos never seemed to end ...
So, I had my head down as I took the steps two at a time.
Half way up, I stopped short. A huge drop of water hit me on the head.
Looking up, I thought maybe the rain was starting up again, instead,
I discovered the drop fell from an aspen leaf.
The aspens line both sides of the stairs.
Their branches hung heavy, over the railings
which I finally noticed were
covered with tiny beads of water, and
the sun had peeked through the clouds
turning these beads of water into shimmering diamonds
of refracted rays of light.
It took my breath away.
And, then invited me to breathe in a way I had not for weeks.
Half-way through the summer,
in a beautiful location
a job, with the sole purpose of helping kids and families
experience God and God's grace
and, I had filled it so full of administrative running
I was in danger of missing this blessing
and God's presence with me, altogether.
I am thankful this flash of insight is not something I will readily forget
or struggle to recognize where the "duh" ... wake up moment came from.
But, even without ever getting hit on the top of the head with a raindrop again,
the rumbling of thunder, lingers.
It is the gift of the Dark Wood, Eric Elnes invites us to discover this week.
Being thunderstruck ... not that we have mountain top
moments like Moses had.
Because, as scripture reveals ... even though we say we
want signs. Clear visions and lightning bolts;
This is a God moment. Listen up.
Humanity has proven, over and over that our memory is fickle
and, not too long after one sign / miracle,
like Jesus turning water into wine
or God making a covenant with God's people and a mountain-top, rumbling
for 40 days and forty nights, ... when Moses returns from the consultation,
the people of God had melted down all their gold, fashioning themselves another god.

Moses breaks the tablets with the commandments

Jesus creates a whip, chasing out the animals and overturns the money changers' bags of coins;

trying to help the people of God, wake up

declutter, stop being distracted by pale substitutes

for the relationship with God this ours, all the time.

Because that is the thing. God doesn't bop us on the head once or twice in our lifetime.

That, until we have these mountain top, born again moments

hit by lightning events;

God wasn't with us.

God is talking to us, attempting to get our attention 24/7;

rumbling like thunder within to wake us up to our truest selves.

The ones we discovered when the light bulb went off.

And, we remembered or discovered for the first time ...

Our soul is the temple of God.

Or as early Christian, Gregory the Great reflects, "The Truth teaches daily in the temple when it carefully instructs the mind of the faithful."

Some days we abide in this communion with God better than others.

That deep rumbling of thunder alerts as our body becomes out of sorts,

because we have let the to do lists begin driving our life, rather than God.

Or substituted golden calves or other religious practices as security blankets

because we are having trouble tuning into what God is trying to say.

Impatient for God to do something about

the amount of time we are in the Dark Wood

or feel more confident if we can exchange something

we do, for the assurance God is on our side.

Thankfully, Jesus breaks in and seeks to drive out anything that is competing with

or distracting us from knowing, hearing, listening to the Spirit

breathed into us; abiding within you.

Lightning and thunder, God speaking to you in the flesh.

Jesus, one with the Father; who prays we too will know

this oneness (John 17).

Not just for ourselves, but for the world God so loves.

Because it is through you and me, others will come to recognize

God, setting up home within them.

Trust, this Truth speaking to them.

And, be as thunderstruck as we have been.

So, take this time to remember those times in your life
when you felt like your world had been rocked,
the lightbulb came on
you sensed a wholeheartedness because mind, body, and soul
resonated with the voice within.
The voice that sounds like thunder or as Eric Elnes
describes - 30 French ballerinas.
Calling us to abundant life, love, peace and joy.
Now and forever. Amen.