



### The Third Sunday in Lent.

*The Collect.*

**W**E beseech thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of thy humble servants, and stretch forth the right hand of thy Majesty, to be our defence against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### The first day of Lent, commonly called Ash Wednesday.

*The Collect.*

**A**LMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent; Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶ This Collect is to be said every day in Lent, after the Collect appointed for the day, until Palm Sunday.

### Devotional Text

*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.* (Psalms 116:15)

It is not likely that many would consider the prophet Moses as a decent subject for our Lenten Devotion, but there is much to be recounted in the life of Moses that parallels the very events of this season. We all know that Christ came from the Heavenly Kingdom and dwelt among us in tabernacles made of mud and straw. It is much as the old black spiritual, Mary's Child, relates it:

*He come from the glory, He come from the glorious kingdom. He come from the glory, He come from the glorious kingdom. Oh, yes! believer! Oh, yes! believer! He come from the glory, He come from the glorious kingdom.*

Now why would Christ come from the glorious Kingdom to abide in such a wasteland of sin and hate as this old world? It is because He was driven by a force whose winds supersede any force we know on earth – simple LOVE. Christ abode from Eternity Past with the Father in Ivory Palaces of such grandeur that the myriad constellations of stars and galaxies are put to shame for beauty. But LOVE cannot contain itself – it must overflow in its expression. So Christ came at Christmas to be laid in a wooden manger for the feeding of beasts. Compared to His Excellency, we are little more than dumb beast feeding on the Bread of Life from that manger.

But how, you may ask, does the life of Moses compare with that of Christ, and of what particular application to the season of Lent which we now observe? These are fair questions, and ones which we must search for solution. At the time of the birth of Moses there was great tribulation for the people of God. Just as Herod had ordered the death of all male children of Bethlehem of two years age and under, so had Pharaoh ordered the death of every male child born to the Israelites in the Land of Goshen. (Exodus 1:22 & Matthew 2:16). You will recall, too, that just as Christ was laid in a manger, Moses was placed in an Ark made from bulrushes by his mother, Jochebed, and the ark was placed in the Nile River. (Exodus 2:1-4) The daughter of Pharaoh spotted the ark, had the baby retrieved and raised the child as her own after allowing its mother to breast-feed it. So before going into the wilderness to fast, as did Christ, Moses was raised in the opulent palaces of Egypt. When it was God's time to call Moses out of Egypt, He did so with great haste. Moses was asked by his own countryman "Who made you a prince and judge over us?" Moses was forty years of age at the time. In defending his people, Israel, Moses committed a crime of manslaughter and was forced into the wilderness to the land of Midian.

He lived in Midian, just as Christ lived in Nazareth – as a stranger in a strange land (the plight of all pilgrim Christians in this world). There Jethro, the man with whom Moses came to live, gave his daughter to Moses to wed – Zipporah. *And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.* (Ex 2:22) After forty more years, God spoke to Moses from the flames of a Burning Bush that was not consumed by the fire. *And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.* (Acts 7:30) Now at eighty years of age, Moses is ready to begin the work for which God had called him. Moses was called by fire to his ministry. Christ was baptized in the Jordan Waters to begin His ministry.

Now, Moses only began that which Christ completed. Moses, by commandment of God, instituted the annual Passover observance. Christ completed that Passover and BECAME our Passover. *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* (1 Cor 5:7-8) Moses received Commandments of God on Mt. Sinai. Christ obtained the free Grace of God for all who would believe on another Mountain outside the gates of Jerusalem.

He journeyed with all of the children of Israel in the Wilderness for forty years. During that time, Moses and the Children of Israel fasted in many ways. They certainly

fasted from comfort and pleasure, and their diet was sparse. Just as the Christian feeds on that Bread of Life which came down from Heaven, so did the Children of Israel feed upon that Manna which came down from God. *I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* (John 6:48-51) Do we ask for MORE than this Heavenly Bread, Friends? Moses and the Children of Israel were tempted along their wilderness journey, and so was Christ when the Spirit drove Him into the Wilderness – for what? To be tempted of the Devil.

Moses was not like Christ in all ways, only in certain typical ways mentioned above. Moses did sin in the Wilderness. He lost his temper more than once. He struck that Rock which represented Christ against the counsel of God. He was forced to tolerate all sorts of disappointments in the constant murmuring of the people just as did Christ. Like Christ, Moses, too, died on a mountain – Mount Nebo – from whose slopes Moses could behold the Promised Land. (Deut 32:49) Moreover, Moses died in looking at the Promised Land from Mount Nebo's forlorn slopes. (Deut 32:50-52) Moses had a particularly noteworthy funeral for the Lord Himself buried Moses. *And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.* (Deut 34:6-7) If the grave of Moses had been known by Israel, it is likely that they would have worshipped Moses at his grave – perhaps this is why the Lord buried him in an unknown land.

During Lent, we are all on a journey much like that of Moses. We try to hide our ears from the discordant noises of the world, from her appealing intrigues, and carnal temptations. Just as Moses had to tolerate the constant nagging of his own people, so do we constantly confront the nay-sayers of faith even in our own churches. Just as Jesus was constantly confronted by evil machinations and failures of faith among the people, so do we confront the same if we bear our crosses and follow Him – not monthly, or weekly – but daily! There looms ahead for each of us our own Mt Nebo, or Jordan Waters.

History records no burial more sublime than that of Moses. It seemed to me, as a child, so unfair that Moses thus left the world from, short of the Land of Promise for which he had so earnestly labored in leading the Children of Israel. He died on the cursed slopes of Moab, yet GOD buried him. The same who laid his body to rest in the valley of the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor and in sight of the beautiful land to which Moses had struggled to bring the people of God, is the same which lifted his soul from the sepulchre of the valley to the heights of Heaven!. Is it not a sad narrative? NO! certainly it is NOT! There are five, at least, salient aspects of the death and burial of Moses: 1) It was a lonely death. 2) It was a peaceful death. 3) It was a sudden and most likely painless death. 4) It was a death whose eyes were fixed on Promise. 5) It was a death honored by God as Care Taker. Christ is marching, as we speak, symbolically toward Golgotha at this season. His death will be much unlike that of Moses. His death will not be lonely. His death will not be peaceful. His death will not be sudden. His death will, however, be fixed upon the hope of Israel and the world. His death will also be most highly honored by God His Father.

God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; therefore the real life of Moses began at the moment of death on Mt Nebo. Instead of being buried with his body

in a lonely grave, Moses was lifted in the Spirit to his Father and to His God. He never left the mountain for the next time we see Moses, he is on another mountain – the Mount of Transfiguration. (Matthew 17:1-3) This is also the last time we see Moses. Soon, Christ shall be crucified on Mt Calvary. He will be placed in a Borrowed Tomb. Can you imagine going to the cemetery director and requesting to merely 'borrow' a tomb for three days? But Christ did not need a permanent tomb for He did not intend to remain there very long. Neither did Moses. Mr. C.F. Alexander penned a fitting tribute to Moses in the following lines:

### **BURIAL OF MOSES**

By Nebo's lonely mountain,  
On this side Jordan's wave,  
In a vale of the land of Moab  
There lies a lonely grave.  
But no man dug that sepulcher,  
And no man saw it e'er;  
For the angels of God upturned the so,  
And laid the dead man there.

And had he not high honor?  
The hill-side for his pall,  
To lie in state while angels wait.  
With stars for tapers tall;  
The dark rock-pines like tossing plumes  
Over his bier to wave,  
And God's own hand in that lonely land  
To lay him in the grave.

An old Scotchman, while dying, was asked what he thought of death, and he replied, "It matters little to me whether I die or live. If I die, I will be with Jesus, and if I live, Jesus will be with me!"