**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**15th August 2021**

**Exodus 3:1-15**

**Prologue**

Naming things is an important matter

It is a power we have

To name something, gives us some kind of authority, ownership, mastery.

Moses asked for God’s name that he could use it.

“Who shall I say you are to Pharaoh” he asked?

The reply was something like this:

My name is the future

I am not limited by what you understand now

Or see now, or know now

I am tied to what is not yet

My name is:

“I will be who I will be””

It is a work of monumental human error

To have translated God’s name the way we have in the bible:

I am who I am.

This is incorrect

It imagines a God limited to now

I am who I am says,

Look around you: this is who I am:

Wildfires and flooding

War and hunger

Pandemics and inequality

I am who I am.

But this is not God’s name.

God’s name is not yet.

God’s name is more than now.

God’s name is yet unknown.

“I will be who I will be”

God’s name is the future tense

**Welcome**

Hello, I’m Roddy Hamilton, the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish and thank you for letting us join you. We are standing on hold ground today. Perhaps we always do, and are not always aware of it. Holy ground is holy, because of who we gather with, because of what we hope towards, because of the story we tell here. So let us metaphorically, or actually, depending on who you are with right now, take off our shoes, touch the ground, and know this is a unique, holy, thin place, of encounter.

**Prayer**

Holy God

Holy and present

Word spoken

And word withheld

In a place that is ordinary and familiar

May we know a presence beyond us

A love around us

A word within us

That we might welcome

Holy God

Holy and real

Between us and around us

Beyond thought and reasoning

Beyond understanding and knowledge

A presence

That we might welcome

Holy God

Holy and silent

A silence deep enough where words matter not

But where our souls connect

Find something ancient and familiar

A love as old as creation

And as new as each breath

We welcome you

In this place

And time

And moment

We pause

We let go the spin of the world

And find our anchor again

The space we need

The breath we take

The beat we hear

The grace that flows

The forgiveness offered

The love renewed

(Pause)

On this holy ground

We are present with you

And may we linger here

May we find peace here

Hear you call us

And lead us into the fullness of life once more

Holy God

Holy and true

In this time together

We praise you

And make your name

Our future

Hallowed

And prayer together:

Our Father, who is in heaven,

Hallowed be your name;

Your kingdom come;

Your will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom,

the power and the glory,

for ever

Amen

**Reading Introduction**

You are out walking the hills. Nowhere is close. Maybe you have been here before, maybe you haven’t. The heather is deep, the burn is flowing just down the hill a little. The mountains on either side of you are ancient with brown and green patches buttered across them. There are no trees up there, they are too high up. It has been damp but the clouds are breaking.

There are ferns curling in patches between the heather and a few small silver birch saplings. And then before you there is a grass rise. It is covered in large clumps with one or two wirey bushes among them. You step close just as one ignites.

**Reading Exodus 3:1-15**

**3**Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2**There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. **3**Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.” **4**When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” **5**Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” **6**He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

**7**Then the Lord said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, **8**and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. **9**The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. **10**So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” **11**But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” **12**He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”

**13**But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” **14**God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’” **15**God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’

**Reflection**

There are certain things I would love to believe… I’d love to believe God had it all sorted out… what’s for you won’t go past you… a predestination of sorts, that doesn’t have you worrying about being able to do anything about the future… because God has sorted it…

But that’s knocked on the head by stories like this with Moses at the burning bush, asking about God’s name, and, in the very mention of it, “I will be what I will be”, we find out the future is unknown, but God is in the making of that future.

And it isn’t just at the burning bush we find that out. We have a plethora of faith stories that remind us of that, if we have ears to hear.

At school, being taught to write an essay, I was told there were three parts to every story: beginning, middle and end.

Now clearly my teachers didn’t know their bibles when they proposed that. Beginning yes, middle yes, but faith stories rarely have an ending.

Think of all the characters of our stories: Abraham, who never saw the great nation of children he was promised, Moses, never reached the promised land, Exile, Babylon, return. It never ends and with a God whose name is “I will be who I will be”, we constantly look into the future for God.

Even in Jesus, there is no ending. Perhaps we are satisfied with the stone rolling and the resurrection, but we don’t describe these things as endings, rather new beginnings.

Having no ending, is not easy. When you have no idea of how things will turn out it is difficult, and pandemics, climate change, economy have all shown us, we don’t know how things will turn out. Nothing is inevitable.

And I, for one, have found that really hard. As an institution, the church is about to go through some of the most major restructuring and re-sizing she has seen in many generations affecting us all locally and nationally.

Part of my anxiety at the moment is that I cannot see what that future will be, and I don’t like it. Normally you have a sense of where things are going. But I really can’t, and I’m irritable and restless because I have never felt in this position before. I am finding it difficult to live into a future unknown, one that isn’t inevitable, one that is not inevitable, to live towards something we genuinely cannot see or even have an idea of what it is like. We are not able to keep the past alive, but we don’t know the future.

And then we remind ourselves of Moses question “Who shall I say you are?” and God’s answer… “I will be who I will be”… we find we have been here before.

This is a story without an ending but it does have one clue: I will be who I will be. In God, we are in relationship with the future. It’s an other way of describing resurrection.

As far as we know, we are the only beings who can imagine the world other than it is.

That is a gift to this weeks headlines about climate change: in imagining a different world we can choose to move towards it. It is not too late, it is not inevitable that this planet is becoming uninhabitable for us. That is a gift to the world after pandemics, imagining a more just, equitable world, and in dreaming it, we can choose to head in that direction. How many people are involved in fighting poverty, disease, injustice, folk who do not believe these things are inevitable. We can and do imagine a different future.

I will be who I will be. Our faith is shaped for the future, and we have a God who makes sense in that future. The future is difficult to imagine, it is stressful to live through something not inevitable, when we have to make choices about that future, but we have a God who is named and shaped in that future.

I have no big conclusion to make about that. No well crafted ending. Just an invitation, a daring one, to follow God’s name. I will be who I will be. The journey there will be through wildernesses and there will be pain, we will want to go back to Egypt, but we cannot.

Today, as God’s People, may we dare the future with the one called the future: I will be who I will be.

**News**

Next week **all-age communion**. We won’t service communion here in church as that is just a bit too complicated at the moment but will create a unique way of sharing communion, as we have done each time over lockdown.

**Think Tank**: how might we be over the next wee while online and face tov face from social groups to discussion, from coffee pot to midweek service. I’m not saying we will pick up any of these straight away but am open discussion about what people feel is possible now.

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

The great I AM

Into everything that shall be, we pray

A future that is not inevitable

Not already laid down

Not fixed by circumstances

So we pray for a planet

Undergoing radical climate change

Where our desire for growth

continues to outweigh resources

And the least will be last again

God of our future

We pray for an environment shaped by beauty

Rather than economy

And believes in a future that can be different

We pray for our prisons

And the seemingly inevitable paths for so many

Into a system that punishes

Rather than heals

God of our future

In the restoration that that future promises

We pray for a justice system shaped by ethics

And compassion

And believes in a future

That can be different

For global leadership

And what seems an inevitable path towards populism

Offering answers that divide us

Feed our baser instincts

God of our future

May we live towards a future

Shaped by different priorities

Different stories

That seek out neighbours

And their well-being

And believes in a future

That can be different

For our national mental and physical health

For that of our communities and parishes

Not the inevitable anxiety of life

But closer communities

Broader neighbourhoods

Deeper relationships

That believes the future

Can be different

And for us all

Families and friends

Those ill and those healing

Those anxious and those lost

Those tired with pandemics

And those worried about them

May you, O God of our future

Guide us

Travel with us

Move alongside us

As we move into this future

And all it is yet to be

For community

For church

For neighbourhood

For friends

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**