



Life Groups in Central Telford Parish

Summer 2016 "Encounters"

Week beginning 22nd May 2016

Exodus 19: Sinai and the Awesome God

- **Welcome**

Do you love or hate thunderstorms? Why?

- **Worship**

- ❖ What sort of God do you worship? What does he look like?
- ❖ Read Revelation 4. How does this help you to see God?
- ❖ Put on some quiet music and imagine yourself standing in front of the throne. How do you feel?
- ❖ Pray using words that describe what you see?
- ❖ You hear a voice from the throne that says "Come closer". How does that feel?
- ❖ Worship God together around the throne!

- **Word**

- Who is the most famous person you have ever met?
- How well do you "know" them or have you just "met" them?
- What are the things that mean you can truly say you "know" someone?

I was talking to someone this week who has met the Queen on seven occasions and he relived some of them as he told me about them. The Queen might actually remember him (though not his name) but I doubt that he would say he "knows" the Queen. We have the awesome honour of being able to "know" God personally.

- ❖ How do you react to the idea that you can "know" God in a relationship?
- ❖ How can we balance the awesome majestic God with the intimacy of a close relationship?

Read Exodus 19:1-6 – **"Standing Before the Awesome God"** - the Israelites come before God in the desert.

- ❖ v1 Do we find it easier to relate to God when times are good or when they are not so easy? Why?
- ❖ v3 Why is it helpful to have someone to help us to meet with God? What does that person need to be?
- ❖ v4 Why is it helpful to reflect on what God has done for us in the past?
- ❖ v5 Why is obedience and faithfulness a key part of any relationship?
- ❖ vv5/6 Are God's promises worth listening to?
- ❖ What happens if we don't and how does it affect the relationship?

Read Exodus 19:7-15 – **"Preparing to Meet With the Awesome God"** – they are made aware of the "rules".

- ❖ v8 Why is unity important if we want to encounter God as a Church?
- ❖ v10 Do we ever consecrate ourselves before preparing to meet with God? Should we?
And what does that mean in the life of our churches today? What should / could we do to do it?
- ❖ The penalties for overstepping the boundaries seem harsh to us today – but where are the boundaries in our relationship with God today? How can we "overstep" them? Do we sometimes do it?

As we try to understand what is happening in this story, we need to enter the mindset of the people of the time. The "religion" (for that is what it was) that was taking shape through the wilderness was one that talked about people working hard at being "clean" in order to meet with God. Sacrifices would happen to show sorrow for sin and cleanliness was absolute (especially in such a difficult place to live). Knowing the boundaries and obeying all the rules were vital parts of what was happening.

Read Exodus 19:16-25 – **"Encountering the Awesome God"** – they see the power and glory of God.

- ❖ vv16-19a Try and picture the moment. What would your thoughts have been as you witnessed this?
In a world where we get to see amazing special effects in 3D Imax or the wonders of the world courtesy of David Attenborough, imagine how this would have profoundly affected those people.
- ❖ What does this say to you about God? Find three words which describe him.
- ❖ vv19b-23 Why does God warn Moses about people coming up the mountain and putting limits around it?
- ❖ How does this story reinforce "religious" images of God?

In Luke 9, we have the story of the Transfiguration, where Jesus appears to Peter, James and John as he really is, bathed in all his glory. Peter says *"Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters-- one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."* (v33) He wants to stay there, of course. An experience of God's awesomeness leads us to want more and some people try to recreate such a moment – and, sadly, it doesn't work because God doesn't like being predictable or working to a "formula". What we are promised is that if we truly want to experience and encounter God, and we prepare ourselves and earnestly desire him, we will experience him in his way and in his time.

• **Walk**

Be honest! What stops us preparing ourselves to meet with God ...

- On a Sunday?
- At a Life Group or other meeting?
- In our daily walk with him?

I know I can list a lot of reasons – none of them worthy ones!

- So what can we realistically do in order to consecrate ourselves?
- What could you do? Yes, you. And me. What could we realistically do?

Perhaps write in your Bible or somewhere significant, something you will do differently as a result of this session.

Pray for any other specific issues people are facing in the Life Group. If you haven't done so, it is a great idea to start a prayer diary, recording the things you have prayed for and seeing how God answers your prayers!

• **Next Time ...**

Week beginning 29th May:

Job 38:1-11– Job and The Fantastic God

