

## **Order of Service for June 21, 2020**

**~Gathering & Welcome**

**~Lighting Christ Candle**

**~Call to Worship:**

**In your house or in mine, in all our houses of prayer,  
God is here, let's worship together.**

**~Opening Prayer:**

**Leader:** We call you by many names, O God: Adonai, the Lord;  
el Shaddai, Almighty; Merciful One; Loving One. We call you Alpha and  
Omega – Beginning and End; Ancient of Days, and New Every Morning.  
But we can also call you Abba/Father, just as Jesus did, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,**

**Hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come,**

**Thy will be done,**

**On earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread,**

**And forgive us our trespasses,**

**As we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation,**

**But deliver us from evil,**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,**

**For ever and ever. Amen.**

**Scripture: Deuteronomy 1: 1, 30-31**

These are the words that Moses spoke to Israel: God who goes before you is  
the one who will fight for you, just as was done for you in Egypt. And  
remember in the wilderness where you saw how God carried you, just as one  
carries a child, all the way you travelled until you reached this place.

**~Reflection: *These are the Words: On Moses, Fathers and Finding Your  
Way***

*These are the Words...*

So begins the book of Deuteronomy

More specifically they are the words attributed to Moses. And there's a lot  
of them: 34 chapters of words.

Well, Moses has a lot to say it seems because Moses and the people, the  
children of Israel, they are at the end of their famous 40 years of wandering

in the desert [40 was the number used in ancient stories to mean ‘until God has brought things to completion.’]

And the people are indeed in a precious and precarious moment: they are poised,

after all these years,

after all these wanderings,

after all these pitfalls and miracles,

to FINALLY enter into the Promised Land!

After generations of going forward and messing up,

Being forgiven and starting again,

They are finally there!

Poised to step into the Promises of God.

And what they are to take with them, as they hover on the threshold, are the Lessons, the Talks, the Words, that Moses has imparted.

So, these are the words that Moses tells the people, his “children” in a momentous time.

Did someone/your Dad impart some words to you at a momentous time?

Before handing over the keys to the truck?

Before you left for Teacher’s College?

Before he let you use the chain saw?

Took your first job?

And, like the children of Israel we heed them or not....

But the more I read and reread these passages I began to see it as so much more than a lecture. Deuteronomy feels very much the story of a man who is looking back over the years and speaking his honest remembrances of their life lived.

-And he recalls it all: the good and the bad: how he disappointed God, and himself and his people.

- How he was afraid to step up, because everything felt so daunting to him.

-And when he did step up, how the days could feel so exhilarating one moment [freedom from bondage!], and so tedious the next [they surely lost track of the days wandering just as we do in the Pandemic] ...

- There was so much more complaining than he expected: about the food, the water, the accommodations....

-Moses talks about how he got really fed up and was going to throw in the towel. Until he realized that he didn’t have to do it all on his own. He could ask for help. He could rely on others to stand alongside and help do the long hard slogging work...that it is so much better that way.

So yes, it is a Book of Directives for a people who are about to step into a new life in a new place.

But theses are also the words of a man who wants to say what *he* has learned from leading the Children of Israel, the people God gifted to him.

And those words resonate so profoundly with me as I lay them alongside the words that some of our New Maryland United Church Dads shared with me this past week:

**Matt Harris:** father to Hudson and Nolan and Mya- Matt speaks deep truth when he says *You can NEVER pack too many snacks!!* Moses has your back Matt, he knows all about dealing with people grumbling for more food. The Israelites got flaky manna in the morning and quail at night – but they began to look at their plates the way many a 3 year old does, saying “I don’t want this!” It won’t last 40 years Matt...I promise!

**Stuart MacGillivray,** Dad to Alex and Allison reminds us that becoming a father necessarily leads to new skills...(Perhaps necessity is also the father of invention?)like learning the art of diapering. And recognizing how a simple cardboard tube can lead to hours of play. Learning to adapt to that which we have on hand: now that must surely have been Moses’ credo too. When the children of Israel entered the wilderness, I’ll bet the smallest members of the band of runaways were quick to come up with a game to while away the time.

**Brodie Power:** Our newest Dad – he is the proud father to brand new, fresh from God, Sophia Rae. He is discovering the loss of sleep...But he has learned in the blink of an eye, in the moment she first took breath: that to be her Dad - it is more than worth every sleepless night to come! Moses walked the floors many a time, and he can reassure you that God does not just remain in the easy times, but can be found keeping us company in the middle of the night: God told Moses I will be with you always, as a cloud in the day, and as a fire going before you in the deep dark night to light the way!

**Cole Wight,** Dad to Kailey and Becca and Brayden says he learned love in a richer way since becoming a father. That it is in the day to day living out of your life with children, whatever mess the day brings, that love grows and deepens. And it opens you up to encompass your other relationships: spouse, extended family. Love begets love it seems.

This widening kind of love let Pharoah’s daughter choose to raise up a Hebrew child as her own, and name him Moses, for she drew him out of the water. This growing kind of love let Moses stand up for his people, and lead them all to new life.

**Adam Nelson :** Dad to Lily and Ella and Chloe: Adam is funny: he asks a question we all can relate to: “It makes me wonder what I did with my time prior to kids!!” In the middle of the wilderness I imagine Moses must have spent some time reminiscing about his easier days, too. Though he had a rough start with being threatened by Herod, and placed in the river in a tarred reed basket. But he also spent many years living in the palace after being adopted by Pharoah’s daughter. Must have seemed like a dream when he was in the midst of those wilderness days. But the busy, task filled days,

the long hard days of leading his people, that was when Moses was living out his true calling to a life of purpose.

It was hard, to be sure. But as Adam says: “Things that seem like a big deal really aren’t when you look at the bigger picture.” The bigger picture...that’s what God kept reminding Moses of too – that a good life lived together in community was worth all the struggle.

**Jeff Knorr**, Dad to Amber and Emma, echoes that. He says: You realize that it is a gift to watch them grow and change and mature over the years: from toddlers to teens...to a graduate – lots of memories! Moses too tells the people to remember these years of wandering and growth, to share the stories of their good times – and challenging times - with their family and friends; to teach it to their children and their children’s children.

**Shawn Parlee**: Dad to Tyler and Brooklyn: Shawn talks of “learning along the way with his family: “When they were younger, there was a tendency to expect perfection out of them, without realizing what they were capable or not capable of doing fully. As I learned that each child is unique in their own way and develop at different paces. They will eventually get there, maybe just at a different pace.

I always had the feeling of wanting to be there to catch them when they may fall or protect them from the potential hurt of others. As they have gotten older, I now realize this is part of life, the kids need to learn from their mistakes or poor decisions. If we don’t they will not have the coping skills to navigate and manage their way through life. It seems to get a little easier as they age, however as a father I always worry about their well-being but also want them to know that I will be there to support them along the way of their journey.”

Moses was forever learning his way too, it seems, Shawn. He would get impatient with the people, feeling they should not complain so much, or that they should have just understood that the plan God had was for their flourishing. But for both Moses and the people, it was often a time of one step forward and two back. Realizing his own mistakes and over-expectations for the people he was leading. The practice of getting back up, dusting yourself off, and starting again is no easy thing. But it is an art worth acquiring.

**Greg Angus, father of Ayla and Audrey**: We don’t hear many funny stories about Moses’ life...not a whole lot of laughing included. But surely there must have been times all along the winding way when Moses had to try and keep from smiling in the face of some shenanigan or other (nothing as dire as the golden calf worship, mind you, but some minor misdemeanor of the children of Israel). But that is one thing Greg is still trying to master: how to keep the “stern father look” when a child is being so darn cute in the midst of misbehaving. Don’t try too hard Greg...I think Moses would have LOVED a few more opportunities to laugh.

The other thing Greg notes is how messed up time is with parenting, or wandering in the wilderness – which is pretty much the same thing. 5 minutes of quiet goes by in a flash...while 5 minutes of crying is endless! **Scott Loftus**, father to Allyson and Emma and Taylor: Scott spoke deep truth when he said “Fatherhood offers you the gift of humility, it makes you check your ego.” The root word of humility comes from “humus” or in Hebrew, adamah, earth, dust. The stuff of which we are made. How beautiful to think that parenting can teach us, or take us back to, of our deep earthy beginnings....that the best way to live is with no pretenses. We get to see a lot of Moses – sometimes he is scared, sometimes angry, sometimes heroic. But the story I love most is where we are reminded of his way of being fully himself, without pretense or ego. This Moses, we are told, could sit and soothe the very face of God.

I also talked to another Dad: one who is almost as old as Moses . **His name is Maurice**: Dad to Michael and Shelagh and Kevin, and ...me: What has he learned by being father to we 4? “Oh,” he said. “Being a father is bigger than you can imagine: It felt at times overwhelming. It made me so thankful. It was and is the most tremendous event of my life.” And he added: *It’s been a wonderful life so far...*

So far!! 101 and a half...but he is ready for more years as Dad. Seems the Promised Land isn’t something you aim for...it’s where you are all along the way.

Happy Father’s Day you lot.

Hang in there.

You are making the world better by all you are doing. And for who you are. Thank you, and Amen.

### ~A Prayer of Gratitude and Love

Holy God,

All of these men who co-created this service today began by saying they didn’t know what they could add...that they weren’t used to putting these things into words. How like Moses! When God told Moses that he was the guy: he was the one to lead the people into new life, Moses began to state all the reasons why he wasn’t “the guy” – mostly because he claimed he “wasn’t great with words.” He even tried to get God to use his brother Aaron, who he claimed would be much better. As you can see, like Moses, they were wrong. They have gifted us with their words, their thoughts, their feelings.

So be with them as they wrangle children and dishes; homeschooling and work;

Give them patience and laughter in abundance.

Help them lean on their partners and families and friends and us,

And you, O God, who promises to be with us, like a cloud by day and a bright and burning light by night.

Amen.

**~The Benediction: The Aaronic Blessing**