**Hebrew Bible:** Hear visionary words of wisdom from the book of Exodus 3:1-15

Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock deep into the wilderness, Moses came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

The messenger of YHWH appeared to Moses in a blazing fire from the midst of a thornbush. Moses saw "The bush is ablaze with fire, and yet it isn't consumed!" Moses said, "Let me go over and look at this remarkable sight and see why the bush doesn't burn up!"

When YHWH saw Moses coming to look more closely, God called out to him from the midst of the bush: "Moses! Moses!"

Moses answered, "I am here."

God said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground!

"I am the God of your ancestors," the voice continued, "the God of Sarah and Abraham, the God of Rebecca and Isaac, the God of Leah and Rachel and Jacob!"

Moses hid his face, afraid to look at the Holy One.

Then YHWH said, "I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt; I have heard their cries under those who oppress them; I have felt their sufferings.

Now I have come down to rescue them from the hand of Egypt, out of their place of suffering, and bring them to a place that is wide and fertile, a land flowing with milk and honey the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

The cry of the children of Israel has reached me, and I have watched how the Egyptians are oppressing them. Now, go! I will send you to Pharaoh, to bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

God answered, "I will be with you, and this is the sign by which you will know that it is I who have sent you: after you bring my people out of Egypt, you will all worship at this very mountain."

"But," Moses said, "when I go to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is this god's name?' what am I to tell them?"

God replied, "I AM AS I AM. This is what you will tell the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' "¶

God spoke further to Moses: "Tell the children of Israel: 'YHWH, the 'I AM,' the God of your ancestors, the God of Sarah and Abraham, of Rebecca and Isaac, of Leah and Rachel and Jacob, has sent me to you.'

This is my Name forever; this is the name you are to remember for all generations."

Pause

For the stories of faith and courage.

***We give thanks.***

**Gospel:** Listen to the words from Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew 16: 13-20

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Chosen One is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'

Jesus said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'

Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the First Born of the living God.'

And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Abba God in heaven.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kin-dom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Pause

For the Word that was in the beginning,
For the word that invites and inspires,
For the word embodied in us,
***We give thanks.***