



## *Here I Am*

*Exodus 3:1–15*

*God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”  
And Moses said, “Here I am.”*

*August 31, 2014*

### **Thought For The Week**

Scriptures

Isaiah 22:19-23 • Romans 11: 33-36 • Matthew 16:13-20

I imagine it is true to say that people in power, leaders of State or Church, given their position, will have many people who wish to consult them on important matters consistent with their office. I am sure that President Veazey, even though he seems to do many things himself, has assigned someone to draw up his daily agenda. If a particular person wishing to see the President is of some international importance, he will be invited in, others will need to wait for awhile or make an appointment. Such a person in secular roles would be called Chief of Staff; and would normally be the managerial head over all the other staff members who work at the business or other type of organization. Not everyone gets to see the President when they wish to.

In government circles the president of the United States, for instance, has someone to arrange his schedule and be in charge of personnel, so that the office if the president will be seen as working smoothly. The present Chief of staff in the year 2014 is Denis McDonough.

Chiefs of Staff hold tremendous power over the large numbers that work for the president. All such people report to him on a daily basis. It's all about image. In all of this, the important issue is efficiency. Is the man or woman doing his/her work effectively? Does the president and others on staff have confidence in him? Does the general public have the sense that the president is doing a good job? In other words, Chief's of Staff work for the boss, not for themselves. If they get this backwards, they are in real trouble.

The position of Chief of Staff goes back a long way in political circles, we have such a situation in the Jewish Testament. A man named Shebna was Chief of Staff to King Hezekiah. He was bearer and keeper of the keys. In short he held the keys to the king's ear. In the reading, Isaiah the prophet severely criticizes Shebna for advising the king to enter into a risky military alliance with Egypt in order to shore up their defenses against the encroaching Assyrian armies. Isaiah, on the contrary, counseled the king to rely solely on God.

All this advice from Isaiah came to naught and finally, Shebna, keeper of the keys to the king, was removed. The official keys, royal robe and sash were taken from him and given to one Eliakim who would now be given the privilege to admit or refuse access to the king. It is obviously a story of failed responsibility; he showed no insight, no prudence.

The gospel relates a similar story of responsibility given but in this instance it is accepted and carried out with pride. It is the story, of course, of Jesus' handing over the Keys of the Kingdom to Peter, the sometime loyal apostle. Under Peter's leadership and other early Christians who shared in his stewardship, the first generation of believers, were able to survive the onslaught of the Roman Empire and the Jewish temple authorities and ultimately establish the Church, as we know it today.

Obviously, it is a story of Peter's faith and his willingness to accept a challenge of leadership that ultimately brought him death on a hill in Rome.

Obviously, we are the recipients of that good leadership: Jesus' promise that his Church would survive against all odds until the end of time is obviously still in order.

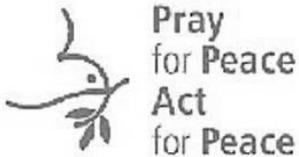
The point of all this, of course, is that faithful leaders are always necessary for the assured future of any venture. But faithful leadership by itself does not assure ultimate success. Those who are faithful followers must also do their part to fulfill Jesus'

promise. The Church, of course, is not President Veazey alone, not the Apostles or Seventies alone but every Community of Christ member who believes that Jesus Christ is Lord and he himself holds the keys to God's kingdom.

In some sense, then, we Christians are all entrusted with a royal robe, sash and set of keys not for ourselves but rather to help open the gates of heaven to all who look with hope to our Christian faith and leadership. Entry into God's kingdom, therefore, is never a private affair. We are all responsible for each other. We all hold the keys to each other's salvation.

No small responsibility!

## Prayer for Peace



Lord of all space, we thank you for knowing us. We thank you for family, friends, those who will be friends, the earth and all its bounty.

We confess that we behave in ways that are less than you created us to be and humbly ask forgiveness.

We rejoice when one step is made toward peace between nations but know the journey is long and the steps are many. On this day, please hear our prayers for the people of Tuvalu.

We would not forget the need for peace in ourselves, our families and our nations. We lament the causes of injustice and seek enlightenment that we may understand better our part in peace for the world. Hear our concerns, we pray.

This day, in response to your call, we offer ourselves as instruments of peace in our world. Amen.

## Stewardship Thought For The Week

Personally, I happen to believe that stewardship isn't about my money, my time or my talents. Stewardship is about something much more basic — and much more profound. Stewardship is an issue of ownership.

In the Bible a steward was a servant who oversaw or managed the master's assets. The steward didn't own the assets. He simply managed them. In today's terms we would probably call them financial managers. Financial managers don't own the assets they oversee. Instead, they have a duty to manage them in accordance with the desires of the owner.

When it comes to stewardship, then, the question we ought to ask ourselves is whose money is it that I'm putting in the plate? Whose time am I offering to spend? Whose talents am I offering to use? The Scriptures would say that the answer to each question is that it is God's — it is God's money I am putting in the offering plate and it is God's time I am using in His service, and it is God's talents I am called to use. After all, according to the Scriptures everything we have belongs to God, including ourselves.