**THE BURNING BUSH**

C: I’m tired, but happy. I’ve been travelling all day, reconnecting with the land, and it has given me a welcome and renewed sense of identity. I have walked along ridges, watched eagles soar, felt the wind rustling through the bushes down by the creek, caught sight of a shy platypus, sat in the shade of a river gum and heard dingoes howling.

I feel at peace. This is what life is all about. Not the noise, busyness, conflict and stress of city life, but the freedom to breathe the fresh air, to feel the warm sun on my face, to hear water gently flowing over rocks and to smell the eucalyptus fragrance that hangs in the air, bathing and restoring my soul.

Ah … what a delight to relax and to be at peace, at one with the world around me. No impossible deadlines to meet; no impatient boss telling me I needed to do more with less, no staff complaining they were underpaid, no JobSeeker applications, no children clamouring for attention, no wife nagging me to do my share of the housework, no … .

Hang on, who’s this? Must be a local farmer, I suppose.

J; Hello, I haven’t seen you here before.

C: No, I’m not from around here. I’ve come from the city and I’m enjoying the peacefulness and timelessness of the country.

J: Yes, it’s a beautiful place. What’s it like in the city?

C: Oh, it’s not like here. Here, I sense the land is giving so much to me: I delight in the views it offers, enjoy watching its rhythms of life, feel safe and at home in its wilderness, and happily exhaust myself exploring its innermost secrets, content in knowing that it accepts me as I am. It’s not trying to force me into any mould.

Being here is such a contrast to living in the city, with the ever-present threat of Covid-19. There, I try so hard to fit in. To meet the demands placed on me, to live up to expectations, to turn the other cheek, to go the extra mile, to be a good husband and father, to put others first.

But there, few pay attention to what I want; most just take, take, take from me, assuming I am good-hearted and resilient. But I’m not; I’ve reached the end of my tether; Covid-19 was the last straw. I need time out to recharge my batteries.

J: Wow, that’s quite a speech! Tell me, have you ever thought that this land, here, where you are right now, might also feel what you feel?

C: Oh yes, I’m sure it does, it’s so lucky. Everyday it can experience peace, tranquillity, the beauty of wilderness, the cycles of nature, the mystery of life.

J: No, that’s not what I meant. What do you think it costs the land to let you disturb its solitude, to have me graze sheep on it, to endure mining deep into its heart, to have its rivers polluted, to suffer devastating bushfires caused by our carelessness, to give up to us its precious metals and fossil fuels, and to have housing estates spread over its lush river meadows?

And it has no control over this. Few listen to the land; most just take, take, take what they want from the land, thinking it is good-hearted and resilient and that it gives freely of its wealth. Is that so different to you? Like you, might the land also be at the end of its tether?”

C: Hang on, what’s going on?

That’s not a farmer there but a Burning Bush!

What does it mean?

Was I just daydreaming?

Does the world need rescuing, like the Israelites needed rescuing?

Is the world special to God, like the Israelites were special to God?

Is the world crying out for justice, like the Israelites were crying out?

Is God asking us to take more care of the world?

What do you think?