

Holiday Island Presbyterian Church
“All Fired Up”
Exodus 3:1-15
September 3, 2017

1Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2**There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. **3**Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.” **4**When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” **5**Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” **6**He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, **8**and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. **9**The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. **10**So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” **11**But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” **12**He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”

13But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to

them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” 15God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’:

This is my name forever,
and this my title for all generations.”

INTRODUCTION:

First, a little background to this story.

When Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt,
he prospered quite well -
- rising to high rank in the government.

Because times were tough in Israel,
the Israelites migrated to Egypt -
- to find food and work.

In Egypt, the Israelites “were fruitful, and multiplied,
and grew exceedingly mighty;
and the land was filled with them”
—and “there arose a new king over Egypt,
who didn’t know Joseph” (1:7-8).

When this new king saw that the Israelites were growing strong,
he oppressed them
and tried to enlist midwives to kill male Hebrew babies (1:15).

The mother of baby Moses hid Moses in a basket in the bulrushes,
who was later discovered by Pharaoh’s daughter,
who raised him in the palace (2:1-10).

**When Moses grew up, he sympathized with his people,
who were suffering under their taskmasters.**

**When he saw an Egyptian mistreating some of the Israelites,
Moses killed the Egyptian.**

Thus he had to flee to Midian to escape punishment (2:11-22).

That's where this scripture begins this morning -

- Moses had made a life for himself as a shepherd.

MOSES--THE LOST SOUL

So, Moses is living a life of “quiet desperation” -

- much like the rest of us.

After forty years of sheep tending

his life had become rather dull and all too predictable.

He knew all the grazing places

and knew the exact location

of every water hole within many miles.

In the solitude of the wilderness,

Moses perhaps talked to himself and even to his sheep.

More than likely, he did a lot of praying, too.

In addition, Moses is drastically under-employed.

Over qualified and working for minimum wage

But he is not idle . . .

. . . he is learning how to tend sheep.

Learning how to keep those who would wander off on their own

from doing just that - wandering off on their own.

He is also alone in his job . . .

. . . providing time to think

. . . and less distractions between him and God.

We don't know for sure what Moses must have been thinking while he was tending those sheep.

We do know from Exodus Chapter 2 -

- when Moses tried to lead the Israelites while they were in Egypt they rejected by saying:

"Who made you a prince or a judge over us?" - vs 14

- The Egyptian Pharaoh sought to kill him -

- which forced him to flee Egypt for Midian (Exodus 2:15).

- and the people of Midian saw Moses as a foreigner,

- "an Egyptian" (Exodus 2:19).

- he refers to himself as

"an alien residing in a foreign land" (2:22).

At least part of what Moses was experiencing was a deep loneliness.

A lack of fulfilment - a lack of a life goal.

Little does Moses know

how much his life is about to change!

THE BUSH

On an otherwise typical day . . .

. . . God chooses to have a meeting with Moses -

- face-to-face

- or burning bush - to face.

**Moses spots a burning bush that is not consumed in the fire
and turns aside to investigate.**

**And what started out as a curiosity - a burning bush -
now becomes something quite different.**

**This flame that continues to burn but not consume
is a sign of God's awesome and powerful holiness,
a fiery holiness that is both dangerous and attractive,
frightening and comforting,
untamed but reassuring.**

**Now I need to warn you
what the bush actually was -
- why it could burn and not be consumed
- is a philosophical conjecture best suited for coffeehouses.**

For our purpose - it is a divine mystery.

**What we need to concentrate on
is the conversation God has with Moses.**

SELF-REVELATION OF GOD

**It all begins with a declaration
that God sees the affliction of the people
with whom God has made an everlasting covenant.**

**The good news: God intends to deliver the people from bondage.
The bad news: God is going to use Moses in that process.**

And the conversation grows much more intense!

It always does, doesn't it?

**We grow comfortable with the routine of our lives . . .
 . . . we like the routine of our days
 even though we may complain about them.**

**God recognizes a need among His people . . .
 . . . whether it is someone to feed His sheep
 physically or spiritually.
 . . . whether it is to be a companion or a leader
 . . . or to head up a committee or ministry . . .**

**God sees . . . and God calls.
 And our day just got reeeeal interesting!**

God says to Moses: "I have a job for you."

And Moses comes up with 4 good reasons not to do it.

First, Moses asks God:

**"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites
 out of Egypt?" Vs. 11**

That is the classic response a pastor hears in congregations.

**I'm not worthy, I'm not qualified,
 I have these sheep I have to tend . . .
 I don't have the talent and skills . . .**

**In other words, Moses is focused on himself;
 what he thinks he is capable of.**

**God sweeps the objection aside
 by promising Moses that God will be with him.**

OK - Moses comes up with another excuse:

Moses turns to the question of God's identity.

"[When] they ask me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to

them?"

God offers a cryptic response.

**14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further,
"Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"**

**15 God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites,
'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the
God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you'"**

I'm not at all sure how much of that answer

Moses actually understood . . .

. . . I'm not sure that I grasp the meaning, either.

The answer that God gave Moses

- the name of God -

- is so sacred that orthodox Jews will not pronounce it

- or even write it down.

They use the letters YHWH.

The short explanation is that God is self-existent:

God exists independently -

- the Creator, but has no creator.

**- God does not need not need help,
either to exist or to accomplish His will.**

God is also eternal and unchangeable,

and always the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

God is not the God who was anything,

**Whatever He was, He continues to be,
and He will be forever.**

Having said all that, God incomprehensible;

we cannot by searching find him out

- this name thwarts all curious inquiries concerning God.

**Moses is not one to give up easily,
he tries yet another objection:
“What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The
Lord did not appear to you’?” (4:1)**

**So God give him a staff that changes -
- from staff to snake and back again.**

**Now at this point,
you have to give Moses credit . . .
. . . he is not giving up easily.
and Moses tries one last time to duck the responsibility**

**So, Moses makes his final excuse
and utter my favorite quote from scripture:
“Here am I; send Aaron!”**

**Actually, he said:
Moses said to the Lord, “Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never
been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to
your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.” But Moses said,
“Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.” 4:10,13**

CONCLUSION:

**Now if you’ll look at those excuses
you’ll find that you and I have used at least one of those
to avoid a particular calling . . .
. . . either in church or in life.**

**There are those who experiece their call from God
with all the pomp and pagentry of a burning bush.
It is crystal clear what they are to do
and all they have to do is say “Yes” or “No”.**

For me, it is God urging me to take one step . . .

. . . then another . . . yet another . . .

Until at last I am doing what God wanted me to do.

Perhaps God knows how rebellious I can be.

So God asks me to do one part . . . then another . . .

We *say* we have full faith and confidence in God -

- we *say* that we will follow wherever we are led . . .

Then comes the call to action

and where there once was self-confidence

mingled with strong faith and great zeal . . .

now distrust of God creeps in under the garb of humility

No matter what our objection may be . . .

. . . it is answered in one small statement God made to Moses:

“I will be with you.”

There may be times when you *feel* all alone;

times when you *feel* that God isn't there or doesn't care . . .

Times of great stress or illness

when our soul cries out to God

and there doesn't seem to be an answer.

There is never a time when God is not there -

never a time when God does not care

never a time when God has abandoned us.

God's love for us is not dependent on our obedience.

God loves us - all of us - in spite of what we do or don't do.

So, when God taps you on the shoulder . . .

. . . or sets a bush on fire in your front yard . . .

. . . take heart.

**Whatever God is asking you to do,
you'll be doing together.**

PRAYER:

**Gracious and Loving God, when You call us to serve You, make that call clear to us. Grant us the courage to say “Yes” to You; knowing that You will be with us. Then grant us the strength and perseverance to complete the task so that one day we might hear You say . . . “Well done, my good and faithful servant.”
In the Name of Jesus we pray. Amen.**