

Sermon: Here I Am, Lord
Text: Exodus 3:1-10 NLT
God's Word: Luke 11:1-13 NLT
Date: Sunday, June 9, 2024
Preacher: Rev. Becky Stephens

3 One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro,^[a] the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai,^[b] the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. 3 "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it." 4 When the LORD saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!" "Here I am!" Moses replied. 5 "Do not come any closer," the LORD warned. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. 6 I am the God of your father^[c]—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God. 7 Then the LORD told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. 9 Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. 10 Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt."

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When I was in seminary, I had a really tough Old Testament Teacher....he was good, but tough. He really expected us to know our stuff, even some stuff that may seem inconsequential.....and his tests....his tests were incredibly difficult....we had no idea what questions he would ask.....and as I read this Scripture I am reminded of one of his questions.....it went like this, "What are the two names for Moses' father-in-law?" Not just one name, but two...Not that anyone reading the Scriptures would necessarily think that even one of the names of Moses' father-in-law was significant, or even the fact that Moses had a father-in-law at all was significant....but we had to know both of the names for Moses' father-in-law.....and as we see in verse 1 of our Scripture....one of the names was Jethro, and if we look

back at chapter 2 verse 18....we see that he was also called Reuel. Amazingly enough....I got this question right. Go figure.

Anyway, with that off my chest....this morning's message will not focus on the names of Moses' father-in-law....nor on the fact that he had a father-in-law at all....I just wanted to prove to myself that at least some of my seminary training....for which I am currently twenty-thousand dollars in debt was of some use.....which it was....it was actually worth every penny.

What this morning's message will focus on is the call of God....and we are all called by God to serve Him....the question is: "Have we heard that call?"....and "Have we answered that call?"

We must keep in mind how amazing it is that God bothers to call us at all. Just think, the Lord Himself, the great God and Savior who created the universe and sustains everything throughout the universe actually stoops down and offers us the wonderful privilege of serving Him! And many of us...too many of us decide to ignore or reject His call. And God usually calls us when we least expect it.

Look at Moses, he was minding his own business...tending Jethro's sheep when all of a sudden "the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush." Now Moses was a man who would stop and seek the meaning of things. As verse three describes, "So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up.'"

Just think what would have happened if Moses had not stopped and gone over to see the unusual sight: he would have....missed the blessing of God....missed this deep experience with God...and missed the call of God upon his life.

It's such a shame that so many of us are not interested in the meaning of things, at least not interested enough to stop and study the real meaning lying behind things--especially the meaning of God and of spiritual things. Too many of us ignore God and the things of God....

I remember how frustrating it used to be to hang out with some of my friends in high school. Whenever I would start a conversation about God, they would inevitably interrupt me....and change the subject...I couldn't understand how they could live without having interest in God, and the things of God, and the meaning of life.

But too many of us are just too busy and too wrapped up in the affairs of this life to take an interest in the things that really matter. Too many of us are only interested in the pleasures of this life and the possessions of this world. Most of us are not like Moses. We are just not willing to stop and to seek the meaning of spiritual things.

And we see that when Moses stopped, he realized that the Lord was appearing to him...notice in verse 4 that “When the Lord saw that” Moses “had gone over to look, God called him from within the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’”

Notice that God identified himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Lord continued to speak to Moses from within the burning bush all the way to the next chapter. In light of these facts, the messenger appears to be the Lord Himself. In any event, the Lord appeared to Moses and Moses stopped and sought the meaning of the Lord’s appearance.

The Lord has also appeared to us; He has come to earth. We must also stop and seek the meaning of His coming because the person who truly seeks the Lord will find Him as Jesus promises in Luke chapter 11: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” Have you asked, have you sought, have you knocked?

Moses did stop and seek to understand the burning bush. God’s call is heard by the person who is seeking God, by the person who wants to know and understand God. And God is always trying to get our attention. Are you seeking God? Do you want to know and understand God?

Jesus declares in Revelation chapter 3: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

And notice that God’s call is personal. God called Moses by name....and Moses’ response? “Here I am.” And this should be our response as well...God’s call to us is personal. He knows each of us by name, and we must always respond positively and openly to God’s call.

Abraham responded, “Here I am.” Samuel responded, “Here I am.” Isaiah responded, “Here I am.” Paul responded, “Here I am.” And Moses responded, “Here I am.” Have we responded, “Here I am?”

Notice that God's call is a holy call. God stopped Moses dead in his tracks. He told Moses not to come any closer and to take off his shoes. Why? Because the ground where he stood was holy ground, but it was not holy in and of itself; it was holy because God was there.

When God told Moses to take off his shoes, He was teaching Moses a very important lesson.... a lesson that we must all learn.... that God is holy. Holy means to be separate and distinct, different--entirely different--from humankind. It means that God is pure, righteous, moral, just, and eternal---in every detail of God's being.

Therefore, when we are in God's presence, we must be prepared, respectful, reverent, and submissive. We must be ready to serve, and through this service we are blessed beyond anything imaginable. Through this service, our lives are changed. And we are able to do things for God that we never could have imagined possible!

This is what makes life worth living...this is the reason that we were created, and if we are not serving God, we will never be complete. Life is difficult enough.... but without God in our lives....it is literally sheer hell.... But God always sees our suffering and misery.... He always hears our cries. God knows all about our sorrows and he is deeply concerned!

So God calls us because He sees our affliction and misery, and He hears our cries for help. As the Bible says in 1 Peter chapter 5, "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." God calls us because he desires to lift us up! And God also calls us because God wants us to see, hear, and be concerned for other people who are suffering in this world.

As we see in verse 7 of our Scripture lesson, The Lord said to Moses, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering." God came down to deliver his people from their suffering. He wanted to deliver them from their enslavement.... God came down to deliver them, to redeem them, to save them!

And this should give us great assurance, great confidence, great security---because God has the power to deliver us....and he is more than willing to do so! He died to do so!

God redeems us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ who saves and delivers us from the power of Satan and from the enslavements of this world. If we listen to the call of Christ, and if we heed it, Christ can and will deliver us out of shame, brokenness, loneliness, routineness, immorality, drugs, alcohol, pornography, stealing, abuse, crime, and any other enslaving power.....as Jesus declares in John chapter 8, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." Freed from sin to righteousness, from death to life, from hell to heaven, from emptiness to fulness, from no direction to purpose, from meaninglessness to significance. Has Jesus set you free? Have you allowed Him too?

We see in verse 8 of our Scripture lesson that God wanted to give the promised land to his people and remember that the promised land of Canaan was a symbol of the promised land of heaven! God not only redeems us from Satan and the world.... He also redeems us to Himself and heaven, and heaven is a place that is flowing with milk and honey, a place where all our needs are abundantly met. And heaven is spacious: there is more than enough room for all who will believe! As Jesus promises in John 14, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would not have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

In verse 10 of our Scripture lesson, God says to Moses, "So now, go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." Moses' call and commission was to rescue people, to deliver them from their enslavement,

And when God calls us, He expects us to respond--to accept his call. He wants us to grasp His vision and compassion for people, and God expects us to go forth as his messengers, to go forth and deliver people from their enslavement to the worldly ways of this earth.

And I can't imagine a higher calling! I can't imagine a more important calling! I can't imagine a more urgent calling! God is calling all of us....are we interested? Have we heard? Have we said---like Moses-- "Here I am?" If not, now is the time because God is calling.