

## I Will Be With You

King of Glory Lutheran

July 2-3, 2022

People of Faith – God’s Story: Moses

Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

### Exodus 3:1-15

Moses 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. 2There 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. 3Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." 4When 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." 5Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6He 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, 8and 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. 9The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." 11But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12He 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.

*God calls Moses to a new vocation. God promises to be with Moses and Moses puts up excuses. The promise that God is with us, is enough. It is what all we need.*

“I will be with you.” “I will be with you,” God says, and Moses isn’t convinced. The task set before Moses isn’t any small task – just leading hundreds if not thousands of Hebrews out of captivity under Pharaoh to freedom. But God has promised, “I will be with you.”

God has been with Moses from the beginning. Here is a quick recap for those of you who didn't watch the movie the Ten Commandments last Easter. Sidenote; isn't it fascinating that movie, produced in 1956 starring Charlton Heston is still being shown every year? God bless Cecil DeMille!

The current king saw how fast the Israelites were having babies and ordered every male son to be killed upon birth. Yet the Hebrew mid-wives disobeyed Pharaoh's command. A Hebrew woman gave birth to a son and put her baby into a basket and set him on the river in between the bullrushes. Pharaoh's daughter, found the baby, but she ordered a Hebrew woman to raise him, and the woman who was called upon for the task, was the baby's own mother! When the child was raised, The mother took the boy back to Pharaoh's daughter who named him Moses because he was pulled from the water.

Raised as an Egyptian, Moses' heart is yet with his own people. One day, seeing an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, Moses kills the Egyptian. Pharaoh hears of it and Moses runs for his life. Then he settles down, has two sons and is a sheep-herder.

Talk about God being with Moses...God has been from the very beginning.

Then Moses' call story begins.

We all have a call story, you know. We're called to a particular vocation, using our God given talents and skills. We get called by God to be a spouse, parent, grandparent, friend, or a new employee. Some of these roles might scare the heebie-jeebies out of us. And most of us don't get a burning bush as a sign when God calls us! But we all get signs from God to point us on the way to who God needs us to be.

God calls to Moses from the fiery bush. "Moses! Moses!" Fire has always been a characteristic of God, plus the meeting takes place at Mount Horeb (also known as Mount Sinai). Mountains in the Hebrew Bible are places where the divine show up. If you're reading a Biblical text about a mountain, Old or New Testament, you can count on God appearing or something miraculous about to happen.

Last week, you heard Pr Deb talk about God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promised them descendants and land; a two-part covenant. Through Abraham and his children and grandchildren, the descendant part of the covenant is coming true. But as the book of Genesis ends, Joseph dies in Egypt, not having seen God's promise of land fulfilled.

Therefore, when God hears God's children groaning under an Egyptian king, God remembers God's part of the promise to bring them to the land; a land flowing with milk and honey.

God reports that God has seen and heard God's people, groaning in slavery under Pharaoh. God has now chosen Moses to be the one to lead the Hebrews out of slavery. Think about that for a moment. Moses was a sheep-herder. He didn't wake up one morning thinking, "I want to deliver the Israelites from their captivity."

No. God made that decision. When you and I feel God's call upon our lives to take action or live into a new way, some feel that call in a moment's notice, like Moses. For others, it comes gently, like God tapping on our shoulder. Tapping, tapping until we take notice, or God finally gives us a good shove. "You will do this!"

Like so many call stories in the scriptures, Moses hesitates. "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

Then Moses says, "Well, suppose, God, your own children, the Israelites, might ask who sent me? What shall I say?"

In Chapter 4, the excuses continue. "But suppose the people won't believe me or listen to me?" (4:1) He then says, "But I'm slow of speech and tongue!" (4:10)

Finally, Moses pleads, "Can't you send someone else?!" (4:13) Moses' faithful response in Chapter three, "Here I am," has slid the slippery slope, to "Skip me, Lord, skip me."

How many of us have made excuses before the Lord God. "Oh, God, I really like it here. I don't want to move my whole family to another state for that job."

"Oh Lord God, I don't think I have the right skills. I've never commanded a spaceship to the moon before!"

"Oh Lord God, don't you understand my cat needs a haircut, the refrigerator is empty and look, Dad is right now calling on the phone!"

Hear me say this: God doesn't call the qualified. God qualifies the called. (repeat) Throughout scripture, God calls ordinary humans to incredible divine tasks. Of course, they cannot do it alone. Of course, they fail when they try it on their own. Of course, when they finally are on their knees, God gets the job done...through them. God gives the exact qualifications to whom God calls.

God knows what God is doing when God calls us. What we lack in skills or tenacity, God will surely make up. For who is this God that calls us? Who is this God who tells Moses, "I will be with you"?

It is the Great I AM. God reveals God's name as "I AM WHO I AM." Or another version of that name is, "I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE" for it is built upon the Hebrew verb "to be". It is related closely to the divine name, Yahweh, which for traditional Jews, is so holy it is not spoken out loud. God's name both hides and reveals. God, not to be constrained by a name, will act how God wants to act.

This is the opposite of last week's story of Abraham and Sarah, who both receive new names from God for their new futures. But "I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE," announces God's identity will be revealed in present and future actions. At various points in Exodus, God says, "I am the Lord God who...."

I would invite us to read Exodus this week. As we follow God through Exodus, God remains faithful to Moses. Moses becomes a trusted leader in God's eyes, as he lives and grows into his new call. Whatever it is God calls us to, we can be leaders dependent upon God who guides, gives wisdom, patience, tenacity and everything we need.

Where and how is God calling us this day? In our next hymn, we hear of warring madness, and weak resignation. God gives us multiple opportunities each week, to walk forward knowing God is with us. As we follow God's call:

Praying for a lost grandchild

Doing moral deliberation on our own stance on abortion

Being the best spouse or friend we can be

Being a faithful steward of God's creation

We always trust, God is with us. The Great I AM has been and will be with us always. Let's not delay in following the call God brings to this community and our own lives. Amen.