

SERMON NOTES - 09/03/23/SCRIPTURE: Exodus 3:1-22 **/MESSAGE:** Holy Moments!

A Presbyterian pastor, Dr. Leininger, tells the story of an SPRC committee that was searching to fill a pastoral position in their church. One evening, as they were going over a resume, hoping to find a perfect minister, tired of the whole process before they called a day, they came upon this letter of introduction from a candidate: To the Staff Parish Relations Committee: It is my understanding that you are in the process of searching for a new pastor, and I would like to apply for the position. I wish I could say that I am a terrific preacher, but I can't - actually, I stutter when I speak. I wish I could say that I have an impressive educational background, but I can't - no college or seminary, just the school of "Hard Knocks." I wish I could say I bring a wealth of experience to the job, but I can't - I have never been a pastor before (unless you count the flock of sheep I have been shepherding). I wish I could say I have wonderful pastoral skills, but I can't - sometimes, I lose my temper and have been known to get violent when upset. Once I even killed somebody, but gracious folks that you are, I am certain you will not hold that against me. I know churches these days want young ministers to attract young members, and I wish I could say that I am young, but I can't - actually, I am almost 80...but I still FEEL young. With all that which might go against me, why am I applying for your position? Simple. One afternoon recently, the voice of God spoke to me and said I had been chosen to lead. I admit, I was a bit reluctant at first, but... So here I am. I look forward to hearing from you and to leading you into an exciting new future. Yours sincerely,

Then, the chairman asked what they thought about this candidate. Surprised, they looked at each other with no words. What? A stuttering, uneducated, inexperienced, arrogant, old, obviously neurotic ex-murderer as their pastor? Somebody must be crazy! Then the chairperson looked around the room and added, "It is signed, 'Moses.'"

Did you all figure out who was the candidate? Moses' story is very familiar to that of most of us. In Sunday school days, we read how a Levite woman bore a boy in Egypt and hid him along the banks of the River Nile to save him from being killed by Pharaoh (Exd 2). Then, Pharaoh's daughter rescued the boy and took him to the palace as an adopted member of the royal family. Later, the little boy Moses grew to be a strong man who would kill a vicious slave master and bury the body in the sand. When Pharaoh tried to kill because of that incident, he ran away to Midian, where he lived in the house of Reuel until this incident of the burning bush.

Today's scripture lesson finds us at a point where we have started thinking about next year. The nominations committee will very soon be approaching some of us with a humble request to take up some leadership roles in our church. Just like that SPRC was diligently looking to fill up a pastoral position, we will make a lot of considerations. In Moses' story in Exodus, God was in the business of recruiting a leader for the children of Israel. Interestingly, God did not look for someone with much free time or a very experienced person. He instead went for an 80-year-old, inexperienced person (or so we think) and someone who was just looking after his father-in-law's flock deep in the wilderness. Remember that Moses is in the wilderness because he was running away from the complications of trying to stand up for his people, but they let him down when someone confronted him for trying to put sense in them by exposing that he had killed an Egyptian. Most probably, nobody in Egypt knew where Moses went, and that made him comfortable grazing goats and sheep even though he was brought up in the house of Pharaoh.

We are not told if Moses was religious at all, though he had married in the house of Jethro/Reuel, a priest of the Median people. So, when he saw the burning bush, he did not think of it as a God moment. However, this was an extraordinary occurrence on an ordinary day. A holy moment. So, when he went closer to see if this bush was really on fire and not being consumed, God called him, and immediately Moses recognized

that this was a holy place, a holy moment. What went on from that point was a confirmation that Moses had passed the interview to lead the children of Israel from captivity, despite his past, his fears, his limitations, and his hesitations.

Friends, we are at a point where many of us are like Moses. We probably tried to work with people but got disappointed, and hence, we ran away like Moses, physically or emotionally. Indeed, we are determined to be busy and focused on other things and not expecting anyone to see us in the corner we are. However, surprise! surprise! God has a memory. He saw your efforts those days. He knows where you are, and He is confident of your capability.

Mine today is to let us know that God has a task for each one of us here. Just like God revealed himself to Moses, He reveals himself to us through holy moments, though they may not be a burning bush like for Moses. Remember that time when you had a big burden for some ministry or work of God here or in our community? That time, you felt compelled to do something. Perhaps it is a verse of scripture, a word of prayer, a moment in a bible study lesson, a sentence from a sermon, the touch of a hand, or the warmth of a smile that God has used to speak to you. That is your holy moment, a burning bush.

However, the problem we have is that we fail to go closer when God shows up.⁴ We turn our heads to the other side of the burning bush, go on with life, and fail to hear the voice of God. Other times, we encounter the Lord, but we come up with excuses like we are overcommitted, we are not qualified, we are old/young, and we are not good enough. Look at the resume of Moses! Would he have been considered as a spiritual leader at all? No! However, when God of heaven revealed himself to him, nobody else could change that. That is the kind of people I pray that God will raise in this church and community. People who have had a holy moment. People who may not qualify in our eyes but have seen the burning bush stepped closer and heard God send them.

Friends, if we are sincere, there are so many who have had one or several of these God moments. All we need is to overcome our doubts, fears, limitations, and obstacles by trusting God's goodness so that we don't miss the opportunity to serve. Let us remember that none of us is under or overqualified for the tasks that God has before us. The bush is still burning today, and the I AM is still sending the Moses' of today to some worthy task. Take a moment and remember when you felt a great urge to do something. A nudge to take up a certain role in the church. Just go for it because the I AM is there with you.

Yes! Step closer to that burning bush and listen to the voice of God. Amen!