

# Written Copy: Exodus 3:6-10 God in the Burning Bush-Come to Save

## Advent Midweek #1

December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

### Text: Exodus 3:6-10

<sup>6</sup> And he said, "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. <sup>7</sup> Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of 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 place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup> Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

### Exegetical Statement

God the Son, the Messenger of the LORD appears to Moses in a supernatural way, a bush that has fire burning within it yet is not consumed. God Himself appearing within creation yet not of creation as a force of destruction, yet purification, and all under His control. He comes to personally call Moses, an unlikely candidate, to be His spokesperson and act as His shepherd to guide His people from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. He comes and acts because He still loves them despite their synchronistic unfaithfulness, He has heard their cries for help, and always answers those cries in His own time and way. Although Moses sees himself as ill equipped, the LORD has been preparing and groom Him for this since birth. Moses will fulfill the LORD's call not by his own skill or ingenuity, but by the powerful leading and guiding hand of the LORD Himself. The LORD has come to call all His chosen people to return to Him will demonstrate through miraculous ways that He alone is God, and He alone has the power to save or destroy. He comes to save His people body and soul and call them back to Him, fulfilling His promise that was of old to His people. Moses is called to be the human agent in God's mighty plan of salvation for His people

### Focus Statement:

Just as God the Son miraculously appeared in a burning bush to call Moses, He later came into creation joined most intimately with us as a newborn baby. He came because He saw our helpless estate and heard our cries before we even cried out. He sent His Spirit with the power of His death and resurrection to break our bonds to sin, death, and he devil and deliver us into the Promised Land of Eternal Life. Through His Spirit He remains joined to us even now as a branch is joined to the vine, walking with us through the wilderness of this world to deliver us to life everlasting

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

We can lose the supernatural wonder and uniqueness that is Jesus Advent out of familiarity with the store told yearly. In doing so we lose the love and care for us that moved God Himself to come down and join with humanity and remain joined forever.

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

Just as we wonder over the sight of God in the burning bush, let us wonder even more over the supernatural joining of God in man in Christ Jesus, and His coming to show us who God is, and how He is the God who loves, saves, protects, and provides the Promised Land of Eternal Life.

### Subject Sentence: The God who comes and is present to save

## **Introduction: A Fresh Look at the Wonderful**

When I got up and prepared to head out to infusion Monday morning a blanket of white stuff was not what I wanted to see. I was not happy to have 3 plus inches covering the car, with the bottom layer being ice stuck to the windshield and freezing the door closed. I was not happy to see and slide through the slick spot at Maple and Van Slyke. I was not happy driving with that apprehensive fear that I might encounter other slick spots on what otherwise appeared to be just wet roadway. But by the time infusion was over 2 hours later, I had a different view of things. The sun had come out, and the snow was glistening on the surrounding fields and trees. It really was rather beautiful.

That's kind of how the first snowfall is for many of us in Michigan is, isn't it? That beautiful white that glistens in the sun covers over the drab brownness of the dead grass, dead and fallen leaves, and hibernating bushes, trees, and plants. But most of us have a different opinion, a different take on that white stuff 4-5 months now. Come April we are sick of seeing it still covering everything. It's bland, it's colorless, it's cold, and we are just done with it. We long to see the green grass and colors of the flowers that belong to spring. By April what we once thought was refreshing and glistening we are tired of and want something new.

After seeing the same thing over and over, even the most wonderful of things can lose its splendor in our eyes. Take for example the story of Jesus birth. You know it well. You hear it every year. You've got the angelic announcements: check. You've got the birth in the stable: check. Cue the shepherds in the fields and the angelic host: check. You've got the baby lying in the manger: check. Well, that's done, let's move on to opening presents, shall we? The same thing can be said of the message concerning the reason why Jesus was born as a baby, the salvation message that is the Gospel. Sometimes as I get to that portion of the sermon, I see the eyes start to wander, heads roll back, eyes close, heads turn to look at whatever distraction is available. "Yes, Jesus died and rose again: check. Yes, He forgives our sins: check. He gives Eternal Life: check. Comes through Baptism: check. Finish up so we can get out of here." Yet both of these messages are so important to who we are as Christians and what we believe and confess. But the familiarity works against us.

So the purpose of this Advent Series is to give you a fresh look on the message you hear year after year. It's to engage your hearts and minds with the wonder that God Himself would come down and mysteriously, supernaturally, and yet in a hidden manner enter His creation with the purpose of becoming one of us just to save us. And to help us with that we are going to look at three ways in the Old Testament that the LORD symbolically foreshadowed the work He would accomplish in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our first is the subject of tonight's sermon: Moses and the Burning Bush

## **A Fresh Look at God's Miraculous Appearing**

**Exodus 3:1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.**

Picture Moses, in his latest vocation, shepherd over his father-in-law Jethro's flock. He's out in the wilderness, grazing them on Mt. Horeb, by himself. We don't know what he was thinking. But perhaps he was taking stock on where he had been and where he was now. He once was living like an Egyptian prince as part of Pharaoh's household, a distinguished family member who was taught the knowledge needed by a prince of Egypt: writing, governance, and leadership. But in an instant, he threw it all away when, in a fit of anger against an Egyptian slave master cruelly beating one of his own people, he killed him. Then, when one of his own people threatened to make this known Moses had to take off and leave. And here he is today. Prince of Egypt turned shepherd in the wilderness.

**Exodus 3:2-3 <sup>2</sup> And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."**

But look! What is this sight? A bush on fire, out here in the midst of nowhere? He thinks "Let me get closer and see this sight!" The closer he looks the more miraculous this sight was. The fire was burning inside the bush, yet it was not consuming the bush. It was fire, alright, with all the properties that belong to a fire, so that means the bush should be igniting and burning up. But it was not. The fire existed with the bush but was not dependent upon the bush as fuel to keep burning. It existed separately apart from the bush, yet within the bush without destroying it.

And who is this appearing to Moses? "The Angel of the LORD". Angel here means not just a spiritual creation of God that serves Him on behalf of mankind. It can mean that. But angel also means "messenger", making known God's divine revelation to mankind. And which member of the Trinity do we know that is associated with being Word of God, the clearest revelation to mankind of who God really is? **John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.** The Word of God made flesh is God the Son who came down to be incarnate as Jesus Christ.

Here we have God the Son, true God, manifesting Himself to Moses. And in greater way this same member of the Trinity would come down and would actually join Himself with humanity in the womb of Mary. The divine nature existing side by side with the human nature, yet not destroying it. In both cases God Himself manifesting Himself in creation, not bound by the natural laws, but using them for His own purpose to reveal Himself to humankind. In our Old Testament Lesson, that human revelation came for Moses.

**Exodus 3:4-6** <sup>4</sup> **When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."** <sup>5</sup> **Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."** <sup>6</sup> **And he said, "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.**

Moses knows that He stands in the manifested presence of the LORD God Almighty. Maker of Heaven and Earth. And because God Himself is truly present that makes this parcel of land holy ground. As a shepherd Moses sandals would have been anything but holy-covered with dirt, and mud, and perhaps sheep excrement. Take off your sandals Moses, recognize where you stand and even more importantly who you stand before. The God of the Patriarchs who came before you, the God who guided them and your people up until this very moment.

This is the One true God manifesting Himself in flames of fire. Fire symbolized both God's power to kill, to consume, but also to purify. Fire was used to melt away the impurities of metal to make them stronger. We confess that we stand in a holy place when we gather for worship. Not because this room in itself is any holier than any other room, but here the LORD chooses to manifest His real but cloaked presence among us. He comes among us here in this place in His Word and His Sacraments. He comes like a burning fire through the work of His law to burn away the sinful impurities in us and change us into a tool that He can use to spread the Gospel as His Church. He comes to refine us as His chosen people. Moses hid his face out of reverent fear and awe. Perhaps among us there should be a touch of the same as we remember whose presence we stand in right now.

### **A Fresh Look at His Call to Humanity**

**Exodus 3:7-8b** <sup>7</sup> **Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of 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 place of the Canaanites..."**

God the Son came not to just wow Moses with this supernatural sight. He came to call Moses into service as His human means to save His people out of slavery in Egypt. He had not forgotten them, even though they had lived in Egypt for 430 years, much of that as slaves made to serve the Egyptian building programs. He had heard their cries and their sufferings. He still loved them. And at just the right time He has come to save them, just as He promised He would. **Genesis 15:13-14** <sup>13</sup> **Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. <sup>14</sup> But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.** And now was the time, and Moses would be the human means by which He would accomplish this.

**Exodus 3:9-10** <sup>9</sup> **And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup> Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."** Moses, I know my people need salvation and I'm going to accomplish this feat through you. You're going to go to Pharaoh and tell him to "Let My People GO!"

**Exodus 3:11** **But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"** Moses responds, "Who? Me?" Oh no, not me Lord! You got the wrong guy! I'm that guy that had to sneak out of town for killing an Egyptian! If I show up, they might want to kill me! I grew up in the palace with that Pharaoh who now rules. I'm no leader, I'm just a shepherd out in the middle of nowhere. I can't speak clearly! I, I, I...."

**Exodus 3:12** **He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."** Moses, you are forgetting that it won't be just you who accomplishes all this. I will be with you. I the God of your forefathers. The Great I AM. That source of all things. The power that is above and over all things. The One who existed back into eternity past, who exists with you right now, and whose existence will never end. I will be with you and by my power all that I've promised will happen. And that sign that God had promised would be fulfilled when Moses would lead the people of Israel through the Red Sea, and to Mt. Horeb, which is also known as Mt. Sinai. And there they would worship before that mountain where God would once again manifest Himself as the fire on high.

## **A Fresh Look at His Powerful Work of Salvation**

God the Son had come, had manifested Himself to call into His service a most unlikely candidate to be he means through which He would save His people from slavery in Egypt. Moses may not have looked like much, and certainly didn't think himself ideally suited for the job, but he was. The LORD had saved him from being killed as a child and placed him in the palace through miraculous means all so he would be equipped to do this job that the LORD was not calling him to do. All part of God's plan from the beginning.

But it wouldn't be by Moses power that Pharaoh would let God's children go. It would be by the mighty hand of the LORD, through 10 plagues, all announced by the LORD's spokesperson Moses. Plagues that would prove to Pharaoh and God's wayward people Israel, who had begun to slip away from Him, the He alone is the only God, the only One who can save, and all other so-called god's do not exist, and have no power to save those who call on them.

Fast forward 1500 years to a baby born to a poor couple in Bethlehem and placed in a feeding trough for animals. And even more unlikely looking candidate to save His people. Yet this baby will fulfill the role Moses was called to do in a far greater way. God would not only be with this baby, this baby was, and is, the LORD God Himself. This is the very God who had come to free His people from slavery in Egypt, who showed all how mighty He was in fighting and defeating the forces of evil. He had now come in a most unassuming way to fight and even greater battle. He came to defeat not earthly enemies but to fight and defeat sin, death, and the devil. And He came to fight not just for the bloodline of Abraham, He came to fight and win for you and for me.

Moses was God instrument cloaked in humility. Jesus was God the Son Himself cloaked humbly in humanity. Yet He showed He was more than a man by the authority He taught with and the miracles He performed. But He most clearly showed His power when He fought and won for us forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life for you on that cross, and confirmed that victory with the empty tomb. Jesus is God working powerfully, supernaturally, yet out of a great love for you. He knows your struggles with sin, He knows you don't have what it takes to free yourself. So He came to do it all for you and to give you that victory as the free gift of grace.

## **Conclusion**

God certainly works in mysterious, yet powerful ways, in ways and means we would never expect. He did so when He appeared to Moses in that burning bush, using a most unlikely candidate to be the human means through which He would save His people. In an even greater and more miraculous way He did so when God the Creator came and joined Himself intimately with humanity, being born as the child of Mary, His divine nature co-existing with the human nature, that through both He would accomplish the saving of not just one nation of people, but all of mankind. He came to save us and give us something greater than the Promised Land of Canaan. He came to give to us the Promised Land of eternal life. And by faith He comes and joins Himself to us intimately as the branch is to the vine through the work of His Holy Spirit, as He creates and sustains faith. May we never lose the wonder of this most miraculous and supernatural work. May we spend this Advent Season pondering all that God has done for us, to us, and in us through the child of Bethlehem. Amen.