

“Take Off Your Shoes”

June 15, 2014

Exodus 3:1-15

1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Mid'ian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." 4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here am I." 5 Then he said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 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. 7 Then the LORD said, "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, 8 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 Per'izzites, the Hivites, and the Jeb'usites. 9 And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" 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 forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain." 13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" 15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5BQWubuC8g>

This scene comes to us from the “Prince of Egypt” and shows us Moses meeting with God and encapsulates our scripture this morning. It has always been one of my favorite depictions of this moment if just how profoundly the animation could capture the AWESOME power of God. Take a look around you, although we have decorated for Vacation Bible School we are still in a place of worship. We might not have the burning bush that Moses had but God is still very much present for we have gathered in his name. That my friends makes this Holy Ground. This is Holy Ground, we are in the presence of God, so take off your shoes, Go on take them off! Humble yourself in the presence of our Lord.

Because that is something that we tend to forget each Sunday as we worship together we forget the Awe some power of God. We forget to be awed by God. We tend to in our New Testament understanding to embrace the teddy bear love of our God. We Sunday after Sunday focus on God’s mercy, God’s grace, God’s forgiveness, and most importantly God’s love as expressed through God’s son Jesus Christ. We focus on how we can live and share it all with one another and take it to the world. Those are all wonderful attributes to God but we often misplace in those that God is still Awe inspiring. We forget the awe inspiring almost fear of being in the presence of God.

Some of this is a generational difference. Church history and many of our personal histories are littered with Bible thumping preachers and teachers who said we were damned to Hell if we did not fear and revere our Lord. Or we were going the way of the Devil if we did not act in accordance to the traditions of the church. This limited understanding of a God who would smite us if we sinned was one that many rebelled against. So in that rebellion we embraced the hipster God of love the God we see most in the New Testament and left out the fearful, vengeful God that we tend to find in the Old Testament.

In both understandings though we also just leave out the AWESOMENESS of God. Our scripture today provides us a clear picture of this God. What we have here in Exodus in this moment is one of the clearest picture of all the sides and natures and understandings of God. Theological language would put all these different understandings into Omnipotent

(all powerful), omniscience (all knowing), omnipresence (present everywhere), and omnibenevolent (all loving). God simply tells us in God's interaction with Moses that God is I AM.

"I Am Who I Am" is one place in Scripture where God speaks about God's self and gives us this encompassing phrase when God speaks to Moses. Moses remember once he realizes he is in the presence of God falls to his knees, hides his face and is struck in Awe. He is overwhelmed by the presence and the profound power of God as evidence by a bush on fire that did not burn. Moses is also aware of the challenge for him to represent God of all that God says and so that is why Moses requests a few things one of which being God's name.

Names remember are profound indicators of identity and purpose in this world. Consider many of our last names come from history naming of occupation or status of a person. This is a profound truth in the Hebrew culture. If you look around you at the banners that show us the twelve tribes of Israel you will also note that each name means something or was given because of their Mother's particular reflection on God's presence in their birth. We ourselves do this as we list out the names of our unborn children and immediately cross out or disregard names we have a bad affiliation with.

Here however is God telling Moses God's name and identifying God's self in a profound phrase. I mean how many of us can stand up proudly and say I AM...Kara Swartz. What does that mean and there are countless ways of understanding my name or any of our names and identities. (Crowd response?)

In Hebrew the phrase I Am Who I Am is *eyah asher eyah* and can actually be translated in a variety of ways. *Eyah* is first person for the phrase 'to be' and *asher* can be translated as 'who, that, which'.

Although the most common understanding is 'I Am Who I Am', *eyah asher eyah* can also mean 'I Was Who I Was' or 'I Will Be Who I Will Be' or even 'I Have Been Whom I Have Been'. Moses asked for God's name so that he, Moses, could go to the people with some proof of authority. God though answers Moses with a riddle because the name of God is infinite and finite, we can not truly know the name of God, we can only know God through our active experiences with God.

This is where the God of the Old Testament, the YHWH God comes from, the active and present God who was both loving and profound but also AWESome. It is this AWESome God, the Great I AM, that Moses encounters and the God that we need to remember more in our lives as Christians today. This is the God of mystery, of power, of compassion and of willingness to be with us and meet us where we are on Holy Ground. God meets us where we are and when we are in the presence of God that place, any place is Holy.

Any place we may be where we experience God is Holy Ground. Consider this as we take our faith and use it in our lives and in mission. Any place where we experience God is Holy Ground. This can be here in our house of worship, outside on a walk when we see the sunset, washing dishes, in the shower, in the car, with people, alone. We are on Holy Ground and there we encounter and experience and come to know better the God who calls God's self I Am who I Am.