

"Have I Got A Job For You!" Ex. 3:1-15; Ps. 105:1-6, 23-26, 45;
Romans 12:9-21
Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church
Rev. David E. Young
Labor Day Weekend, August 31, 2008

Whenever we hear the name of Moses we think of the 10 Commandments. We think Mt. Sinai. We think Cecil B. DeMille. Today's story from Exodus is right up there with the other Moses stories. It is very well-known and easy to see in our minds' eyes as Moses encounters God for the first time.

Just a quick review: Moses is the guy who was born into slavery, floated into the palace and was raised in privilege as a member of Pharaoh's household. He killed an Egyptian who was abusing a Hebrew slave and the word got out. So he made a run for it and for many years has been living in exile in the area between Egypt and Israel - - the Sinai desert.

By now Moses has settled down. He is married with a family. This new life is quiet and peaceful, far from Pharaoh's reach. He works as a shepherd taking care of his father-in-law's sheep.

On this particular day he is on the mountain of God called Mt. Sinai or Mt. Horeb (it's the same place, just 2 different names). Suddenly, a wavering of light caught his eye. Turning and looking at it he saw a bush that was on fire but was still green.

It's not exactly the kind of thing one sees every day. So Moses decided to take a closer look. There's nothing in the story to make us think that Moses saw this as a "God Event"! He was just curious, that's all.

That was a Big Mistake! When God saw that he had gotten Moses' attention, God spoke.

You know, there are many days when we just go through the motions and we see - but don't really see - all manner of burning bushes. Often we decide we just don't have time to check it out. Sometimes it's a person who is in some kind of distress. Sometimes it's a situation of injustice or inequity - maybe nothing huge - just something that needs someone to address it and to focus on it. Sometimes it is in the form of a phone call or an email or a casual conversation in the stands at a Football Game.

But we just keep going our way because we know that it will require something of us and much of the time our plate is already just too full "tending sheep in the wilderness" - doing a job, keeping our heads down, staying out of trouble, just trying to get by, wanting to do the right thing, but not the dangerous thing...

Moses certainly wasn't looking for God that day up on the mountain. He may have been looking for a lost sheep or two, but for God? Please!

But one thing this story points out to us is that God comes to us when we least expect it. We turn the corner and there it is - - a burning bush. And it draws us in because we are just too curious to ignore it.

You may be here this morning just because you are curious. Someone invited you or you took it upon yourself to come and see for yourself what Christian community is like and what worship at Chapel Lane is like. It may not be anything more than that: curiosity. And that's great! God can work with that.

There's no indication in this story that Moses was a particularly religious. He wasn't a "holy roller". His wife was a "P.K." (preacher's kid), but he was just a guy without a green card who rolled into town and came to the rescue of his future wife and her sisters when they were being hassled by some shepherds at a well. That's all.

Moses didn't have any special training. It all started with his curiosity. You may find that amazing things have begun for you because of your curiosity:

"Hmm.. I wonder where she lives?" "Why does it have to be this way?" "What if I take the left fork in the road instead of the right?" "I wonder what might happen if we mix these two chemicals together...?"

Curiosity caught Moses and sent his life in a totally unexpected direction. And it may have caught you too. And if not - - it may yet!

I know our Nominating Committee is already getting to work. Maybe they should try lighting a match to some shrubbery near your house?

Be on the lookout for how God is calling your name and calling you into a path of service. It's really not a question of "if" we are called to serve God, but "how" we are called and "what" we are called to do.

A general call to "Feed the hungry" is different from "Go and Give Fred something to eat." A general call to "do something about the lack of low income housing in our area" is different

from "Jane and her 3 children need a decent and affordable place to live."

Like Moses, we can think up all kinds of kinds of excuses when the call becomes very specific and when we know it will upset our lives and the lives of others. It is easy to beg off and to say "I'm too busy" or "I don't have that gift," or "It's just too risky..."

That's ok too. Moses does his share of questioning and making excuses. In fact, most of chapter 3 and a good part of chapter 4 in Exodus is shaped by Moses' questions and protests.

It's good to know we are in the company of people like Moses when we offer up our own questions and protests and excuses and doubts.

And Moses' questions are very useful. Without his questions we would not know God's name: "I am who I am."

Without his protests we would not be reminded that God is with us from beginning to end and is like a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Without Moses' repeated whining we would not know how serious God is about not going it alone. The God who called all things into being out of nothing with just a word, now chooses to act through ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

God reached out to Moses with a job that needed to be done. God promised to equip him, to be with him and to guide him. Still, Moses balked. But, in the end, we know that he went on to be God's chosen instrument to lead people out of bondage and into freedom and to shape God's covenant people in whose lineage we

now stand because of Christ.

God has a job for each one of us. When God will call us is anyone's guess: Moses was 80 years old when he had his burning bush experience. I suspect we won't have to wait that long, especially when we remember that our baptism is our first calling, our first entrée into our job of living as followers of Christ. That is our preeminent calling, our mission and our challenge.

Along with our baptism we have this burning bush story which has not been given to us merely as a history lesson. It is given to us so that we might consider more seriously how God is calling our names, today.

And if we haven't yet heard God calling, that's ok. Moses spend a long time in exile, hearing only the bleating of sheep before he heard the unmistakable voice that told him his life was now being lived on holy ground. // Look around. Listen. God is calling and God has a job for you, too.

It is a calling worthy of our best energy and efforts. And it can be a source of deep satisfaction and joy for us, especially when we look back and realize that all our yesterdays have been given to us to prepare us for this "today".

This day is God's gift to us. This scripture story is God's reminder to us that there is only one "retirement plan" in God's kingdom. We are all fully vested and all the premiums have been paid on the Cross. What's left is for us to live as the forgiven, faithful, fearless people of God who know they have a job to do and are willing and anxious to get down off the mountain and into the world, knowing that God is already there and is on the move! Thanks be to God! Amen.