

"Redeemed for Redemptive Living"

Scripture: Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 105:7-45

Hymns: Blest be the God of Israel 752; Lift up your hearts/Sing Hallelujah 526 (1-3,5) or When Israel was in Egypt's land 708; Lord, whose love 722

Choruses: Days of Elijah or Whom shall I fear (God of Angel Armies)

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St. Andrew's Presbyterian

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Where do you go when you're in trouble?

Many of us are blessed with a number of resources.

We have family, friends, colleagues, and our church.

We have people that we can turn to when we need advice,  
Encouragement, or practical assistance.

We are blessed with many resources.

And as people of faith we have that supreme resource,  
Our loving God.

Sometimes we are slow to bring our concerns

To our Heavenly Father,

But when we do,

we are reminded that God hears us,  
God rescues us and delivers us.

Sometimes the liberation is through circumstance.

Other times the help comes from family and friends

Then there are occasions when the rescue is miraculous:  
An act of God that can't easily be explained.

I remember a story of a young woman  
Who was distraught when told  
That computers weren't allowed in her college classroom.

Students had been using their laptops  
for many non-educational purposes  
And this was creating distractions for others.  
As a response the instructor had them banned.

Now this caused the young woman a lot of anxiety.  
Not because she needed to check in on Facebook  
But because she had a learning disability  
That affected her fine motor skills  
And made it very challenging  
to take hand-written notes.

She didn't know what to do.

She knew that this would hinder her education.  
But she was afraid to bring this up before the professor.  
She had already told him about her challenges.

All she felt she could do was pray.  
So she prayed.  
She prayed.

The next day the professor mentioned  
That he needed someone to transcribe his lectures.  
They would be given an exemption to use their laptop.

And who did he ask? You guessed it.  
He asked the young woman who prayed.

It's an encouraging story:  
God listens to our cries.  
God observes our need.  
God intervenes in our world.

Every once in a while we are reminded  
That YES, God is present with us.  
And we are encouraged in the life of faith.

But is this all that there is to the life of faith?  
Remembering that God is with us?  
Learning to lean on God in times of need?

Today's Old Testament lesson  
reminds us of God's concern for his people.  
But it also reveals that God has purposes  
for the people God saves.

Many of you know the background  
To the story of the Exodus.

During a time of famine  
Jacob's family relocates to Egypt.  
They are treated as honored guests  
because of their connection to Joseph:  
who was by then  
the number two person in the entire land.

But as time passes Joseph's legacy is forgotten  
 And these guests are now regarded as unwelcomed strangers.  
 They are conscripted to work on the Pharaoh's construction  
 Projects as slaves.

Because of concerns about their growing numbers  
 one particularly ruthless Pharaoh  
 orders that the male Jewish babies be murdered.

The people cry out in their misery.  
 But will anyone save them?  
 What resources do they have to lean on  
 Now that Joseph is long-gone?

PAUSE

In today's story, that burning bush encounter,  
 The Lord declares to Moses:

"I have observed the misery of my people...  
 I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters.  
 Indeed, I know their sufferings,  
 and I have come down to deliver them."<sup>i</sup>

This statement is extremely significant  
 In particular its use of verbs.

That God should 'observe' the people's pain  
 And 'hear' their cries shows us that God is aware of life's traumas.

That God would 'know' the peoples sufferings  
 "testifies to God's experience of this suffering...  
 [that] God has so entered into their sufferings  
 as to have deeply felt what they are having to endure."<sup>ii</sup>

And that God has 'come down', that God has 'come down,'  
 Illustrates what is crucial to our knowledge of God  
 Both in the Old Testament  
 and in the incarnation of Jesus Christ:  
 our God steps into human history to save."<sup>iii</sup>

As one who in his youth had tried  
 To rescue his own people,  
 These words, spoken from the burning bush,  
 Must have sounded like music to Moses' ears.

After four centuries of oppression  
 God would finally intervene.

Of course the Lord continues to speak  
 And this is where it gets interesting.  
 Yes God has come down,  
 but he is recruiting Moses to be an instrument  
 Of this great redemption:

"The cry of the Israelites has now come to me;  
 I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them.  
 So come [Moses],  
 I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people,  
 the Israelites, out of Egypt."<sup>iv</sup>

Moses isn't so sure about this proposal.

He was thinking that God would deal with Pharaoh on his own,  
 Not through a lowly shepherd,  
 Someone whose picture  
 Had been on 'Egypt's Most Wanted'.

"And so Moses [answers] God, 'But why me?  
 What makes you think that I could ever go to Pharaoh  
 and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?'"

*[It is clear that Moses feels insufficient for the task...*

But when Moses asks 'why me?']  
 'I'll be with you,' [is the Lord's simple reply].<sup>v</sup>

This isn't quite enough for Moses.  
 Moses wants to know God's name.  
 He wants God to reveal something of God's character  
 That he can take to the Israelites  
 Who may question this redemption plan.

You'll remember that when Jacob asked this question,  
 God beat around the bush.

But when Moses asks, God replies:  
 "I am who I am.  
 This is what you are to say to the Israelites:  
 'I am has sent me to you.'"<sup>vi</sup>

"The name that God gives to Moses—"I AM WHO I AM"—  
 is a revelation of God's utter and complete self-sufficiency...

[God] alone is of Himself...

God, and only God, is dependent on nothing.

[What] this means, for Moses and for Israel,

[is] that God is not dependent on Pharaoh's cooperation  
to accomplish what He has promised."<sup>vii</sup>

God doesn't even need Moses to do what God wants.

And yet God invites him...

PAUSE

When we observe instances of human suffering—

a natural disaster, a marital breakdown, a battle with addiction—

We often turn to God

Asking God to come down

And powerfully intervene in these situations.

But what we find in this story

Is that God won't have us sit idly

As spectators.

While God doesn't need us, God makes room for us.

God invites us to take part

In God's redemption plans

PAUSE

More and more regularly

We've been asking you to make invitations...

We've been inviting you to bring friends and neighbors  
To church lunches, to studies and courses,  
To special services.

Making invitations to places or events

Where God's name is spoken isn't that easy for us.

We live in a culture where faith is considered private.

And while we may love our own church

We are not convinced that others

Will be impressed by the community or the programming.

They probably won't.

But ultimately we're not inviting them

To meet another community.

We are inviting them to take part in a group  
That communes with our mighty and loving God.

The God we know in Jesus

Is all-sufficient.

The God we know in Jesus

Observes our suffering, hears our cries,  
And has come down to save us.

Who else is gonna introduce our friends and neighbors

To the Savior we have met in Jesus?



They won't hear about him at school.  
 They don't talk about him at Probis  
 Or in a community choir.

It is only in the church community  
 That we proclaim and celebrate a Saviour  
 That the world around us so desperately needs.

Is there someone in your life  
 That you feel in your bones,  
 Needs to meet Jesus?

Can you picture them?

Now listen...  
 How is God calling you  
 to be an agent in their redemption?

As you step out in faith may you step out in confidence.  
 You will not do this in your own power.  
 God is completely sufficient and promises to be with us  
 in this work.

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Exodus 3:7-8 NRSV

<sup>ii</sup> Terence E. Fretheim *Exodus* 60

<sup>iii</sup> See Gary W. Charles "Exodus 3:1-15; Exegetical Perspective" *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary - Feasting on the Word – Year A, Volume 4: Season After Pentecost 2 (Propers 17-Reign of Christ)*.

<sup>iv</sup> Exodus 3:9 NRSV

<sup>v</sup> Exodus 3:11-12 MSG

<sup>vi</sup> Exodus 3:14 NIV

<sup>vii</sup> K. Scott Oliphint "I am who I am" June 19, 2017 <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/i-am-who-i-am/>