

Called by Name, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 16080831
Exodus 3:1-15 and Romans 12:9-21
Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 31 August, 2008

It was a quiet day for Moses, out tending his father-in-law's sheep in the wilderness— a sheep here looking for some fresh grass, a lamb over there by the cliff that needed to be brought back near the rest of the herd. All in all, it was a pretty boring day for someone who had grown up in the bustling Washington D. C. of his day where he was used to knowing about the comings and goings of the powerful. Moses was minding his own business. Or, more correctly, he was minding his father-in-law's business, for the sheep belonged to him.

Something caught Moses' attention— a glint in the corner of his eye. Was it a mirage- a shimmering from the heat in that hot wilderness? He moved for a closer look. It was a bush that was burning. It was burning, but it wasn't burning. The scripture says that this burning bush was an "angel of the Lord." You probably thought that an angel of the Lord was a cute cherub flying around with wings. An angel is any appearance of God.

If you want to see an angel, it's more important to keep your heart open than your eyes. God appears to us, but we often don't recognize it until later. It may be through a friend who led us away from danger. It may be through a spouse who tells us things about ourselves that we wouldn't have recognized on our own. It may be through the person of a childhood minister who invited us to look into a particular vocation. If Moses hadn't taken the time to stop and look, the Israelites would still be in slavery and we wouldn't know God's name.

God called Moses by name: "Moses. Moses!"

Moses said, "What?"

God began telling Moses some good news. "I've seen the misery of my people. I've heard their cry. I know their sufferings." And then, the best news of all: "I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey..."¹

You can imagine the happiness Moses must have felt! "Yea God, go get 'em!"

God said, "Wait a minute, Moses."

Moses said, "What?"

God said, "I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."²

Moses said, "What? "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" We want God to act to bring justice to our world; we want to see fairness and an end to war; we pray to God for healing for a friend, but God can not do it without us.

God is calling you by name to do something big. God needs you to right some wrong or help someone feel less lonely. God wants to send you to free someone from a bondage. God is asking you to help lift someone from poverty.

Moses came up with a number of excuses about why he couldn't do the job. "Who am I?" Moses asked.

God said, "I'll be with you."

Moses asked, "What should I tell them when they ask for your name?"

¹Exodus 3:8

²Exodus 3:10

God said, “Tell them I am who I am!” (“You may not know who you are, but I know who I am.”)

See, we get our identity from the One who knows who He is. God called Himself by name. We get our identity from the great I AM. That’s all we need to know.

God is who God is, and God will be who God will be.

God calls us by name, and that’s how we get our identity. God calls us by name to do some great thing.

It’s up to us to stop, come closer, and listen.

Don’t tell God you’re too young and you don’t really know who you are yet. Don’t tell God you’re too old and too tired, or your retired. There is no retirement from God’s work. God calls you by name, and God will be with you.

Moses was just a shepherd, and God used this shepherd to perform an awesome task of freeing people from slavery. Moses went to Pharaoh and spoke truth to power: “God doesn’t want people in slavery. God doesn’t want people to be used or cheated, or hurt.” And this was Moses, just a shepherd.

God gave Moses a larger purpose for his life than simply tending sheep. Be open to God’s call to you that will give your life a larger purpose.

What can be different about the purpose of your life because of the reality of God?