

SERMON 14th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, AUGUST 29, 2026

“Thanks, but No Thanks.” Based on Exodus 3: 1-15

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The reading before us today is one of powerful story where God chooses and calls someone to do great things God has in mind. Long before Jesus called his disciples, twelve ordinary people whom Jesus invited to follow him and later become his apostles—we see here in Exodus how God calls Moses to do a task, that even Moses himself does not think he is capable of doing.

Now, can you think of a situation where you felt God calling you to do something, and as soon as you realized the weight of the responsibility it involved, your immediate response was, “Thanks God, but no, thanks.”

I can’t read your mind, but when I asked myself this question, there are several scenario I have in mind, and perhaps one of them is what you recounted in your mind just now. Maybe it was a situation where you were asked to take on a leadership somewhere. You thought, *“I appreciate the trust, but I don't think I'm the right person for this.”* Perhaps someone asked you to serve on a committee at a church, or lead a Bible study, or help with a ministry of the church on some sorts, and your first thought was, *“Surely there is someone else who can do this better than me.”*

Or beyond church’s walls, God's calling can come anytime and anywhere. Sometimes it comes through a person who needs our help. A neighbour who is struggling. A family member who needs our attention. Or someone who has been hurt and needs us to listen. And sometimes, when we recognize what might be required of us, we quietly hope that someone else will step in.

So today, let us dig deeper our reading on Exodus 3 to learn how is calling from God usually works and how should we response to it:

“Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush.” (Ex. 3: 1-2)

Here, Moses was simply going about his daily routine, tending flock as a shepherd. Nothing about that day seemed particularly extraordinary. He was doing what he had probably done countless times before. And yet, in the middle of that ordinary day, “the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush.”

God showed up in unexpected time and place.

For Moses and the people of his time, if something spiritual or holy was going to happen, they would expect it happen at a temple or some recognized sacred place. But here, Moses was not in a temple. He was in the wilderness, on a mountain, taking care of sheep. And that was precisely where God chose to meet him.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, here is the first important lesson from today's story: God can show up anywhere—even in the most ordinary and unexpected places and on unexpected time.

It is interesting that sometimes human, especially those who are religious, divide our lives into “sacred” and “ordinary” moments. We expect to encounter God in worship, in prayer, in Scripture, in church. But the story of Moses reminds us that God is not limited to the places we consider holy. God can meet us in our workplace, in our kitchen, on a walk, while we are driving, in a conversation with a friend, or even while we are simply doing the same routine we have done a hundred times before. The thing is are we paying attention?

The text continues,

“Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, ‘I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.’” (Ex. 3:3)

Friends, Moses sees something strange, something that does not make sense, and instead of ignoring it or running away, he goes closer. He stops what he is doing and pays attention. And perhaps that is where God's call often begins—not with a dramatic voice from heaven, but with our willingness to stop and notice.

Sometimes God may be trying to get our attention through something we have been overlooking: a person who keeps coming to mind, a need in our community, or even a restlessness in our own hearts. Moses could have kept walking. But he didn't. Here, before Moses ever answered God's call, he first had to be willing to pay attention to what God was doing.

Now, continuing our reading, on verse 4,

"When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." (Ex. 3:4)

When Moses draws near, God calls his name and Moses responds, "Here I am." There is something beautiful about that simple response. Moses does not yet know what God is going to ask of him. He does not know how difficult the journey will be. At this moment, he simply says, "Here I am."

I wonder how often we miss God's call simply because we are too busy, too distracted, or too comfortable to stop and look again, and to answer God who calls our name. We may be waiting for God to speak through something spectacular, while God is already trying to get our attention through something right in front of us.

Now, I will give us another 1 minute silence and I would like us to reflect on this question: *What is the burning bush in your life? What have you been walking past that God may be asking you to notice? And if you stop long enough to look, are you willing to hear what God might be saying to you?*

Continuing the story, now we get into the meat of this story, the reason of God meet Moses. The call.

"And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." (Ex. 3:9-10)

Here comes the task.

And if I were Moses, I think this would be the moment when I would start looking around, wondering, *“God, are you talking to me? Are you sure you have the right person? I have only be leading sheep so far, leading people I believe would be a lot different!”*

And Moses asks his question in verse 11:

“Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

I think many of us can relate to Moses here. There is a big difference between believing that something needs to be done and believing that we are the person who should do it. We can look at a situation and say, “Someone needs to help.” But when the responsibility comes to us, suddenly we have a very different response, either because of our capability or our busyness.

And Moses certainly had reasons to feel insecure about his capability. He was not a powerful leader. He was not standing in a position of influence. He was a shepherd in the wilderness. And if you remember Moses' story, he also had a complicated past. He had fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave. He had spent years away from Egypt. And now God was asking him to go back and stand before Pharaoh—the most powerful person in Egypt—and demand that Pharaoh let God's people go.

No wonder Moses asks, “Who am I?”

But pay attention to God's response. God does not say, “Moses, let me tell you why you are actually more talented and qualified than you think. Here is the list....” No, God doesn't give Moses even a motivational speech about his leadership potential. Instead, God simply says:

“I will be with you.”

That is God's answer to Moses' question. When Moses asks, “Who am I?” God answers, “I will be with you.” And there is a profound difference between those two things. Moses is looking at himself—his ability, his history, his limitations, his inadequacies. But God redirects Moses' attention away from himself and toward God.

Because the truth is, in life we often have a very good list of reasons why we are not the right person.

*"I'm too old."; "I'm too young."; "I don't have enough experience."; "I don't know enough."
"I'm too busy."; "Someone else would be much better at this."*

Friends in Christ, the confidence of Christian calling does not ultimately come from believing that we are capable of doing everything God asks of us. From this story we learn that it comes from trusting that we will not be doing it alone.

Moses is about to discover that God's call is not simply an invitation to accomplish a difficult task. It is an invitation to participate in what God is already doing. God has already heard the cries of the Israelites. God has already seen their suffering. God has already decided to deliver them. Moses is then being invited to become part of God's work.

And hopefully that changes how we understand calling. Sometimes we think calling is about God giving us a big assignment and expecting us to accomplish it through our own strength. But Exodus 3 shows us that God calls us, God sends us, and God promises to be with us.

Seeing the story as a bigger picture, we also can see the intimacy of God is beautiful in this passage and how God loves, hear, and deliver God's people. God of Moses, God that we praise and worship through Jesus Christ, is the God who has "seen the affliction" (v.7) of God's people and has "heard their cry"(v.7). God is not a God who remains distant and uninterested in the lives of the people. God knows their sufferings, our sufferings intimately. And as God would like to "deliver" them, God is also would like Tod deliver us. God's promise and unfailing love is not only with and for the Israelites 2000 years ago, it still burning today for us.

So now, friends, knowing that we receive God's love each and every day of our lives, how will we respond when God calls us to share that love through the opportunities placed before us? When God calls us to serve, to care, to reach out, to speak up, or simply to be present for someone who needs us, what will our response be? Will we say, "Here I am, God. Send me"? Or will we say, "God, thank you so much for trusting me... but no thanks!"

The choice is ours. But may we have the courage to respond like Moses: "Here I am."