

“Your Burning Bush” - Exodus 3:1-10 – Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs

One of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s most famous messages is the “I Have a Dream” speech. We are in the third week of our Dare to Dream series, and today, we are looking at how you can identify your God-given dream and your “burning bush.” Every single person has been created by God to be part of God’s redemptive mission in the world. God didn’t put you here just to eat food and make a living. What is your life mission? How can you identify that life mission?

What is so remarkable about Moses discovering the burning bush is that Moses goes through three life stages. It seems that most of us have to go through each of these stages to really see and discover our purpose. The first stage we see Moses go through, and we all begin here, is the stage of what Mike Slaughter calls Empire Building or Ladder Climbing. Moses was consumed in the first 40 years of his life as being Prince of Egypt. During this first stage, he is totally self-absorbed and he is doing his own thing. We are so busy doing all this stuff that if we are people of faith, it is not so much that we are saying, “God, what is your will for my life?” Rather, it is “God, bless me, and everything I am doing.”

There seem to be three driving forces in stage one. First, we are driven by **Appetite**. As babies we want food, then we want all the toys. Then we have to get that job so we can drive the right kind of car. We want all of this stuff and we want more. And we can never get enough, because there is always more. The next driving force is **Approval**. We desire affirmation and recognition. The third is **Ambition**. It is really from where this whole expression of ladder climbing comes. This is still part of stage one—the “Bless Me, God” stage. This doesn’t have anything to do with serving God’s purpose. It has everything to do with God’s serving your ambition, your esteem; your appetites and giving you stuff.

This can lead us to stage two. (Some never get out of stage 1!) The transition usually begins with a mid-life crisis. You get sick. You lose a job or a spouse. You get disillusioned - you lose focus. And you cry to God, “Save me.” When Moses was out supervising Egyptian slaves, he saw the slave masters beating a slave. Moses got mad at this one slave master and killed him. Moses had to flee for his life, and he became a sheep herder in another land for the next 40 years. This is the time when your prayer is no longer, “Bless me.” Your prayer becomes “Save me.” Mike Slaughter says that it is at this point that you become most receptive to a burning bush moment.

Stage three is when you intentionally change the focus of your priority. All of a sudden you realize, “Oh, my gosh, I am standing on holy ground. This is God’s place. It is not all about me.” The burning bush moment is when you hear God speak directly so that you know your purpose. Your life mission will always be connected to God’s redemptive purpose. God is not interested in investing in your self-interest. God said to Moses, “I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now go, I am sending you.” Mike Slaughter affirms that God usually works not through miracles but through human flesh and blood. And if you think about it, who is the savior of the world? He was flesh and blood. God is not going to invest in our personal stuff. That is stage one “bless me.” Stage two is “save me.” Stage three is “use me.” Notice the difference in prayers.

Last Monday we all remembered the life and ministry of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. When Dr. King went to Birmingham, Alabama to march for civil rights, he was arrested and put in jail where he wrote, “A Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Here is one paragraph: *“I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects us all indirectly.”* Seeing the effects of segregation and the Jim Crow laws, he knew God was calling him to act and speak for civil rights.

We have heard the word of God. The real question I want to ask is, “What are you going to do about it?” The first place to begin is to just ask yourself this question, “Which of these three life stages am I in right now?” Are you in the first stage—**God Bless Me**; the second stage—**God Save Me**; or the third stage—**God Use Me**? Have you seen a burning bush? Have you heard from God what your dream is? If you have, then act on it! A dream without action is meaningless. Some of you may be confused. You want to know God’s dream but feel like you are stuck. That is an okay place to be. Here is all you need to do at that place. Make yourself totally available to God. Say, “God, I don’t know what you want me to do, but here I am without any kind of reservation. Just show me and use me.” And take a leap of faith into God’s dream for you. Alleluia and Amen.

Spend Time in Prayer Each Day

Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs 1/10/23

Spend time in prayer each day.
Hear what God has to say.
May we the Lord obey.
They're at the burning bush,
God gave Moses a push.
May we the Lord obey.

God gives our life purpose,
As we follow Jesus.
May we the Lord obey.
If we but do God’s will,
Our purpose we’ll fulfill.
May we the Lord obey.

Seek out God's holy ground,
Where God's will, will be found.
May we the Lord obey.
May the Lord's call be clear.
May we do what we hear.
May we the Lord obey.

God's joy will fill our hearts,
As we each do our parts.
May we the Lord obey.
We'll give to God our praise.
We'll serve God all our days.
May we the Lord obey.