

Place: Lurgan Baptist 16:6:2013

MOSES, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

Reading: Exodus 3:1-10

3. THE MOUNT OF GOD

It must have been a very ordinary day, it probably started like just any other day in the forty years of his wilderness experience. The sun rose in the normal manner, the sheep were browsing as they always did, the giant mountains around which Moses worked loomed large as they ever did, the desert was as silent as before. *I mean there was nothing in the outward circumstances to let Moses know that this ordinary day was going to become a very extraordinary day.* But before this day is over the desert place is going to become a divine place, for Moses is going to have a confrontation with God, Moses is going to be confronted with the God of this universe who will reveal His plan and His purpose for his life.

You see, any day becomes an extra-ordinary day when God gets in that day. In the ordinary circumstances of life, when God breaks in and when God speaks to our heart, and when we become aware of the presence of the living God, the ordinary becomes very extra-ordinary. Now do you see where Moses is Spiritually: do you recall we saw him as he struck the first blow for the emancipation of Israel? Seething with righteous anger as he saw an Israelite being maltreated by an Egyptian Moses, killed the Egyptian and hastily buried him in the

sand. Why? “*For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver him but they understood not.*” (Acts 7:25) His intervention was premature. He had other courses to master in the School of God for he was still too strong for God to use. So now he spends forty years in the desert learning to be nothing. Now do you see where Moses is Domestically? Look at (2:21-22) Actually, he fathered a couple of sons, two sons we are told in (Acts 7:29) Do you see where Moses is Vocationally? He was a shepherd for his father in law. He didn't even have his own flock, he married the man's daughter, borrowed a second hand shepherd's staff and said, “*Okay where are the sheep?*” Do you see Moses is Geographically? Look at (3:1) Now Horeb was located in the Sinai peninsula, in comparison to where Moses lived with his in laws it was called “the backside of the desert.” (3:1) The Hebrews had an interesting way of referring to location. They faced east, and everything behind them, the west area, was called “the backside.” Moses at this moment, was in the west, or backside of the desert.

I mean the desert was his address. Have you ever been driving through some forsaken stretch of land and your have turned to your spouse or friend and said, “*Boy, aren't you glad we don't live here?*” My for Moses this no man's land was home. Yet it was here at Horeb that Moses met with God. It was just your common, ordinary, day shift with the sheep. Nothing more. Nothing less. Nothing else. Just another day at the wilderness office, under the shadow of Mount Horeb. I mean can you picture Moses chalking off his 14,600th day as Jethro's

assistant shepherd ? Then God breaks in. My in the life of every Christian, there should be a place of meeting with God. There should be a “ *burning bush*,” experience that gives direction to your life. Moses is an example of one who can be used regardless of his past experiences or present circumstances. You see, “ *the mountain of God*,” was a blessed place for Moses. I want to suggest to you that it was,

(1) A PLACE OF CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate is to meditate, to ponder, to reflect. Moses had plenty of time to do that for he had entered the second phase of his life. You see, the life of Moses falls neatly into 3 periods of forty years. *Moses spent 40 years in the Court of Pharaoh learning to be something. Then he spent 40 years in the Desert of Midian learning to be nothing. Then he spent 40 years on the road to Canaan proving God to be everything.* (Acts 7:23) My here was a man who had one time held high hopes of serving God and his generation in a big way, but now he is married, he is settled down in the middle years of his life, has a family and seems to be quite content that things should be that way. (2:21) Yet surely during those 40 years and during these days at Horeb, Moses must have had thoughts of God.

“ *Has the Lord forgotten me ? Has He put me on the shelf ? Am I really to be involved in His work ? Or is it all just a pipe dream ?*” I wonder could it be that these are the very questions that you are asking. Perhaps like Moses you have a consciousness that your future lies elsewhere,

but at the moment the jigsaw pieces are not fitting together and you’re asking, “ *Has the Lord forgotten me ? What is the Lord doing with my life ? Is this the desire I have to be involved in God’s work, just that **my desire** ?*” Two factors must have stirred Moses in his contemplation of God at this time. The first was,

(a) *THE PASSING OF THE YEARS:*

Think of it. **F, o, r, t, y.** years. Will you allow that to penetrate your mind ? Don’t let it escape your notice. He came to the desert as an alien, and forty years later school was finishing. *Moses spent four decades in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry.* Moses spent forty years in no man’s land. My are you between age forty and eighty ? Are you in a desert this ? Well, its part of God’s plan. *God not only plans the breadth of a test, He plans the length as well. His timing is every bit as significant as his testing.* It seemed just like yesterday that Moses had dreamed his dreams of the deliverance he would bring to his people, and then suddenly disaster struck. But it was not yesterday, it was all in the distant past, forty years had gone by and for forty years Moses had lived with his sheep, his dreams, his memories and his thoughts.

“ *God cannot use me now,*” he must have thought.

“ *Great achievements are for the young not for men of my age, my time for usefulness is gone.*” Tell me, have these been your sentiments ? Like Moses have you settled down to trivial living but with memories of dreams you used to dream of attempting great things for God ? Of expecting

great things from God ? Like Moses have you settled down to memories of attempts that had been designed to achieve so much but ended in total failure ? The passing of the years. But then time is no object with a God who demands quality at all costs. My whenever you are tempted to grow impatient with God's timetable for your life, remember Moses who spent two years of preparation for every year of ministry. Here's Moses spending one third of his life at the backside of the desert, and at the mount of God. For Moses there was (a) But there was also,

(b) THE PATTERN OF HIS LIFE:

Do you see how (Ch 3) opens ? The Midianites were a rich and powerful people, and though some seemed to have settled in cities (Num 31:10) the majority led nomadic lives. Moses was a nomad content to look after sheep. But what could a shepherd do, to bring deliverance to a nation ? Sure, when Moses was a Prince in the Court of Pharaoh, he could have wielded influence, as a prince, yes, but as a shepherd, no, a thousand times no. *Shepherds did not deliver nations, they looked after sheep.* The time for usefulness, for effectiveness, for dreams, for achievement was past and gone. He was a shepherd and that was that. Do you feel like that this ? What is your present position right now ? Is it as far removed from significant living as the task of Moses looking after sheep ? Are you a secretary in an office ? Are you a nurse caring for the sick ? Are you a shop assistant behind the counter ? Are you a teacher, a mother ? Are you working in a factory as an engineer ? Are you unemployed,

retired ? Do you ever think along the lines that Moses must have thought time and time again ? What has what I am doing now, to do with spiritual greatness and achievement ? Maybe you're saying to yourself, "*I'm going to lose my usefulness. I'm forgotten. God's left me behind, Time is running out. Opportunities are passing by. I'll never get out of this place.*" (1)

(2) A PLACE OF CONFRONTATION

You see, something happened one day that shattered the even tenor of his life. This man who had settled down to a life of obscurity was suddenly startled and stabbed awake. What happened that day changed everything for Moses. I want you to consider,

(a) THE VISION THAT HE SAW:

What did Moses see ? He saw a bush that burned with fire and was not consumed. Moreover "*the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.*" (3:2) Here is God's awesome holiness often represented by the emblem of fire (19:18 Rev 1:14) God confronted Moses, and we are told that Moses turned aside to "*see this great sight.*" (3:3) Now what did it all mean ? What did the sight of this burning bush signify to Moses ? Did it speak to him of his people, that nation which was still suffering in the fires of persecution ? Did it speak to him of that people whose sufferings and need he had almost forgotten ? (Deut 4:20) That people who had been preserved by God for God was in their midst. (3:2 Dan 3:25) They were still God's chosen people and

while Moses was living a cosy, comfortable and contented life they were still in the furnace of affliction. Or did the burning bush speak to Moses of himself? It was just a common acacia bush, an ordinary thorn bush of the desert. A bush that no one would have noticed and thought important, but this bush was alight and aflame with the presence of God. It was transformed by the fire of God's presence. It was not the character of the bush it was the fire in it that distinguished it from the thousands around. Ian Thomas entitled, one of his sermons "**Any Old Bush Will Do,**" his point was not that there was something unusual about the bush. He simply says that God could have chosen any bush in the backside of that desert because the miracle is not in the bush, the miracle is in God in that bush. You see, there was not any greatness in Moses but the greatness was in the fact that God is in the life of Moses. The bush was a miracle. Could God work a miracle in Moses life? At the moment he turned aside to look we are told that "*the angel of the Lord appeared unto him.*" (3:2)

This is what Bible scholars call a Christophany, or a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. You see, the Lord was then concerned with him. *With Moses the reject, the failure, the shepherd, the older man and what was seen by Moses assured him that God can take the ordinary things and make them great.* Can God really do that? Of course he can. He can a Mary Slessor an ordinary loom worker from Aberdeen and make her a power for good on the continent of Africa. He can take a young man like Charles Spurgeon saved at the age of 15 and by the age of 19 it seemed as if all London was flocking to hear him. He can

take Billy Sunday the American evangelist who used slang language and had unusual antics on the preaching platform, to bring hundreds of thousands to Christ. On one occasion Billy was preaching and he said "*hell hot, heaven sweet, judgement sure, Jesus saves,*" and he gave the invitation and multitudes came forward "*to hit the sawdust trail,*" and give their life to Christ. Among those who came forward was an old man with a long white beard. He stood near the platform. For some reason Billy Sunday was fascinated with that beard. He could not take his eyes off it, Finally temptation overcame him and the unpredictable evangelist went to the edge of the platform, bent over, grasped the man's beard and pulled it several times, saying "**Honk, honk.**" Can you imagine that? Just an ordinary bush but transformed as the result of God's indwelling presence. (a)

(b) THE VOICE THAT HE HEARD:

For out of this bush came the voice of God blending past, present and future in one marvellous statement. The Past: "*I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.*" (3:6) The Present: "*I have surely seen the affliction of my people.*" (3:7) The Future: "*Come now therefore and I will send thee.*" (3:10) This voice reminded Moses of,

1. The Power of God:

His power was such that He could override the laws of nature by making a bush burn without it perishing.

2. The Purity of God:

The Hebrew word translated “*holy*,” literally means “*separated*.” God was saying to Moses, “*I want you to separate yourself from your past. I want you to remove from your mind your immediate responsibilities. Moses give Me your undivided attention. Moses be still and know that I am God.*”

3. The Purpose of God:

I mean look at that list. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Those are the Bible’s superstars. Not so. Had it not been for God’s grace, not one of them would have accomplished anything worthwhile. Do you see what the Lord is saying? “*Moses, I am the God of men who have failed. I am the God of ordinary men, who have accomplished some extraordinary things because of My enabling power.*” Perhaps like Moses you gave up any idea of God doing something great through you. Maybe like Moses you’ve known past failure. Does your present job seem so far distant from spiritual achievement?

Then again, like Moses you have settled down with a family. But the question is, have you ever heard God’s voice? Have you heard Him say, “*I want you, I need you, come and I will send thee.*” Indeed is this not God’s Word **generally** to all of us? For how does God effect divine salvation? How does He bring folk out of bondage into liberty? Through human instrumentality, through human ministry, through you and me. “*Come now therefore and I will send thee.*” (3:10) The mount of God (1) (2)

(3) A PLACE OF CONSECRATION

There’s a 19th century proverb that says this. “*The bird with the broken pinion never soars as high again.*” In other words, once you have failed you will never ever attain the heights you did before. Now that proverb may sound good, the only problem is, it ain’t true. If birds with broken pinions could never fly again, you wouldn’t be listening to this preacher. *Do you recall the divisions in Moses life?* Forty years thinking he was somebody, but now at eighty he realizes that he is nobody. Have you got there that? Maybe you’re asking, “*Why doesn’t God use me?*” Because you are too big for God, you are too strong for God, you are too proud for God. God will have to bring you to an end of yourself before He puts you in a place of significant service for Him. You see, after forty years in the School of God, Moses has now got,

(a) THE ATTITUDE OF A SERVANT:

Do you see (3:3) He took the time to turn aside to see what God was doing. Now that’s simple isn’t it? Moses stepped aside from his responsibilities and headed in another direction. Yet it isn’t easy to get believers to do that. Christians want to meet with God, they want to know the purpose of God for their lives but they are not willing to “*turn aside.*” Can I encourage you each day to “*turn aside,*” to begin your day with a quiet time. Meet with God in the light of His Word and the atmosphere of prayer. Now I want to be very honest with you, many of those days, when you have that daily quiet time, will be

very ordinary days. There may be days when you will not be aware of an unusual presence of God in your life. But I want to tell you something, if you will take time to turn aside and meet God, there will be some days along the way when the bush will burn with fire, there will be times when God will come down and meet with you in an unusual way. Do you see Moses now ? He's got (a) But not only that, he's got,

(b) THE APPEARANCE OF A SERVANT:

All of which were accustomed to being barefooted. But not only are his feet bare but his face is hid. (3:6) Now does all of this not give additional emphasis to the holiness of God ? “ *The reason the place was holy was because God was there.* ” (Rawlinson) It was therefore a token of respect and submission. My is there any truth that is more urgently needed by the church ? This is the day of easy and breezy familiarity with God. There seems to be little consciousness of how great God is and unworthy we are. A. W. Pink says, “ *We scarcely recognize Him, He seems to have lost His identity.* ” My do we meet with God with a holy reverence ? Now I don't mean that you should be unnatural when you come into God's presence, but I wonder have we lost the awareness of the purity, majesty, and sovereignty of God ? Look at Moses now (a) (b) and,

(c) THE ANSWER OF A SERVANT:

You see, God gives a double knock at his heart's door, God says, “ *Moses, Moses.* ” (3:4) The call of God is

always individual and personal. My God knows you. God knows you by name, God knows exactly where you are, God knows what your circumstances are, and I want to tell you, God knows how to knock at your heart's door, God knows how to get your attention. “ *And he said, Here am I.* ” (3:4) The original Hebrew reveals that he only spoke one word, (hinaynee) which could be rendered, “ *I'm here,* or “ *Its me.* ” That's all he said. I mean forty years before he would have hauled out his C.V. “ *Need someone special. Glad you located me Lord. I was thinking You might. You want to check out my work experience. Honors and awards ! Do you want to see my commendations Lord ? I've got about three pages here.* ” Back then he would have expected a divine call but not now. He's had forty years of obscurity and silence in God's school of the desert. He's become a nobody. So when the divine call comes he simply says, “ *I'm here.* ”

Do you know something ? That's all the Lord wants to hear from you when He speaks. “ *Here am I,* ” ready to listen, ready to serve. You see, God is checking out your humility, your sensitivity and your availability. My what does it take to qualify as a bush that God will use ? *You have to be burnable.* You see, any old bush will do as long as God is in the bush. Moses “ *I want you to burn for Me, as no man has burned before. You have been seasoned and dried out. And I have pruned away from you all those thing you used to hang on. I have reduced you to a simple love for Me, and that's all I want.* ” I wonder has the Lord brought you to that place where you can say, “ *I'm here Lord, I'm Yours, thorns and all. Just see me aflame.* ” Florence Nightingale at thirty wrote in her diary,

“ I am thirty years of age, the age at which Christ began His mission. Now no more childish things, no more vain things. Now Lord let me think only of Thy will.” Years later near the end of her illustrious heroic life she was asked for her life’s secret and she replied, *“ Well, I can give only one explanation. That is, I have kept nothing back from God.”* Are you beginning to see the place that Horeb was ? (1) (2) (3) Finally, it was,

(4) A PLACE OF CONSOLATION

My if you ever doubted the heart of God for His own people, read these words until the Holy Spirit convinces you otherwise.

“ I have surely seen, And have heard their cry, I know their sorrows, and I come down to deliver them.”

(a) “ I know,” (3:7) That’s the Perception of God:

You see, the Lord was reassuring Moses, *“ Moses I’ve been watching this situation. I’ve seen my people weeping at night. I’ve heard the crack of the whip and the cries of the babies. I have the little ones thrown in the Nile. Moses none of it has escaped my notice. I know.”* My can I remind you of that this ? The Lord knows exactly where you are in life. I wonder, do you find yourself in a situation that seems terribly unfair ? Are your circumstances harsh and hard to handle ? Is your heart breaking because of events beyond your control ? Listen, He knows, He cares, He understands, He feels, He is touched by it. Does Jesus care ? Oh, yes He cares.

(b) “ I am,” (3:8) That’s the Purpose of God:

That’s the gospel right there. You see, God came down in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, and He came down to bring us *“ out,”* that He might bring us *“ in.”* (a) (b)

(c) “ I will,” (3:10) That’s the Promise of God:

What ? Send me to Pharaoh ? To do what ? Here was something that Moses have staggered Moses to realise that God wanted him, that his people needed him, and that God was going to send him back to do the very work that he had once dreamed of doing. The reject was required and wanted. *“ Come now therefore and I will send thee,”* I wonder is this God’s Word specifically to some believer here this ? Is God putting His hand on your life and saying, *“ Come now therefore and I will send thee ?”*

Moses said, “ Here am I.”

Isaiah said, “ Here am I.”

Mary said, “ Here am I.”

Paul said, “ Here am I.”

Can you say *“ Here am I ?”* Are you available, usable and burnable ? Someone asked General William Booth the secret of his life. He hesitated a second and then with tears in his eyes said, *“ I will tell you the secret, God has had all of me there was to have.”* What a place Horeb was, the mountain of God. God had a task to be done, and He chose a man who was busy to do it. I wonder, have you come to the mountain of God in your life ?

