

March 8, 2017
Lent 1 Midweek
Exodus 3:7-10, 4:1-17

Moses had his routine. It wasn't like the palace back in Egypt, but he'd likely grown accustomed to it once he ran away and settled down. In Midian he'd taken a wife, had a son, had a nice, quiet job of tending the flocks. Life was good.

Then, Wham! Burning bush. God comes into Moses's life and turns everything around and upside down.

First and foremost, God turns Moses toward God. We're not told what Moses's worship practice was prior to the bush, but being raised by pagan Egyptians and then running off to live with pagan Midianites I'm thinking, like Abraham before him, Moses wasn't too pious. But also like Abraham before him, having a conversation with the One True God tends to bring one to faith real quick.

I'm thinking Moses was fine with that. He now knows Yahweh, the God of the Jews, is God. Moses, being a Jew, would say that's good and be content to worship this God rightly for the rest of his life and receive Yahweh's blessings and promises.

But God also turns Moses toward Egypt, the unbelieving world with all its strength and power. That's scary. Moses starts to make excuses. And it's kind of funny how God turns Moses to go—He gives Him more scary! *"The Lord said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' He said, 'A staff.' And he said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it."* If that's not enough, God then makes Moses's hand leprous! I bet that was comforting! Then God tells him a third sign will be a boat load of water turned to blood. It's no wonder that Moses asks God to send someone else! But that just makes God angry, which was probably the scariest part of all.

As we journey through Lent and focus on our repentance, our turning away from sin and the world and toward God, Moses is worth considering, because we have a lot in common with him.

You're here because you've encountered God, not in a burning bush, but in your Holy Baptism where He washed you in water and the Spirit and brought you to saving faith in the One True God. But like Moses, we'd be more than content to simply walk in our daily routine possessing this wonderful truth, never leaving the Midian of our safe, sheltered lives and personal faith.

But the simple fact is that you and I and every other Christian is called on to do more than simply play it safe with our faith. Remember, Jesus declared that we are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. We are to have an effect those who encounter us.

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He commissioned the eleven apostles to "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...*" That work didn't come to a screeching halt when those eleven apostles were martyred, dead and gone. No; the disciples they made, made more disciples.

"Since we have such a hope, we are very bold..." says St. Peter. He is talking about how, having the glory of Jesus Christ crucified and risen for our salvation made plain to us, we are bold to make it plain to others in our words and actions. But are we? Perhaps we have more to repent of than just sin.

A lot of us are scared like Moses, and for the same reasons. We don't think we have the knowledge and skills to share Jesus. We don't think those who hear us will receive our message well. We fear not only rejection, but even persecution for our boldness in Christ. It's scary.

But here also God guides us to repentance. Like with Moses, some of this turning is through fear. God puts us on the spot sometimes and we confess God because we must, we have no other choice. We fear God rather than men. Some of our brothers and sisters in Christ this very day are dying because their faith is questioned at the barrel of a gun. Knowing Jesus is Lord and that He said rather clearly, *“Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven,”* they faithfully and boldly proclaim Christ’s name and receive a blessed death.

And not to that extreme, but here in the states we might get put on the spot and out of fear of God we admit the truth, “I believe in Jesus. I am a Christian.”

But that’s not what makes us bold in Christ. That’s right fear of God over fear of the world. What makes us bold is not fear, but love. The love God showed us in sacrificing His own Son that we who were far away from God would be brought near; that makes us react. And, like Moses, we react in two directions.

Of course, first and foremost we love God. He saves us. He forgives us. He provides for us here in this life and restores us to His kingdom, both now and in the age to come. Of course we love Him, praise Him, worship Him, and receive His wonderful gifts of life and salvation with thanksgiving.

But we also react toward our neighbor in following Christ’s commission; we share the Word. We make disciples. We share God’s Word that others might be freed from slavery to sin.

We can take hope from Moses in this. He wasn’t all that excited about God’s plans for him in the beginning. He really needed some prodding from Yahweh. But he did God’s will and

God accomplished great things through him. Israel was freed and God's plan of salvation went forward. And after a while, Moses actually grew into the role of prophet, law-giver and leader.

Love your God and love your neighbor. Be bold in your faith for God has saved you in Christ. Be bold toward your neighbors because God has saved them in Christ and they really need to know that. Be bold because you have the wisdom to fear and love God above all things. Be bold because God has turned you from being at peace with the dying world to being at peace with the living God.

Reaching out as Christ's ambassador is scary. But God has given you the privilege of carrying His message of freedom and salvation to your Egypt, wherever in your life that may be. Step out of your comfort zone and share Jesus. You are called to this, and those around you desperately need to hear this. Be bold.

You have nothing to fear. Moses, for all of his hemming and hawing and missteps in the vocation to which God called him inherited the kingdom of heaven and stood with the risen Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. You also have died and risen with Christ and stand victorious over all enemies that would seek to harm you.

Repent of your fear, turn toward your world and be bold in Christ.

Amen.