



“The Call of Moses”

Exodus 3

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Sermon audio and text available at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

Has anyone ever called on you to do something difficult?

I have a confession to make. And on Mothers Day, I know this is a dangerous confession to make! Sometimes, early in the morning, when my kids were babies, I heard them crying and pretended to be asleep so my wife would get up to look after them. And I'm sorry!

Have you ever ignored someone calling out to you? Pretended you can't hear them? Have you ever done that to **God**? Have you ever ignored God's call for you to do something? Or pretended that you didn't hear him? Or are you still waiting to hear his call?

- Today, we're looking at Exodus 3, when God calls Moses from a burning bush. But first, a bit of background to the story...

In the book of Genesis we had Joseph, with his Technicolor dream coat. And he had a nasty bunch of brothers who sold him into slavery. But God looked after Joseph and brought him to Egypt. God made Joseph a very important man in Egypt. Then all of Joseph's family came to Egypt and lived there. There were 70 in Joseph's Israelite family when they arrived.

Then, after a lot of time had passed, a different Pharaoh came along and things got pretty bad for the Israelites – the Israelites became **slaves** in Egypt. Joseph and all his brothers had died, but the Israelites became "exceedingly numerous" (Exodus 1:7). Pharaoh was worried there were too many of them so he ordered that all the young Israelite baby boys be killed. Moses was one of those babies. But in God's plan, Moses escaped, and ended up being raised by Pharaoh's daughter.

One day, Moses saw an Israelite being treated badly by an Egyptian. So he grabs the Egyptian, takes him behind a sand dune and kills him. When people find out what Moses did, he becomes a fugitive and runs away to a place called Midian. In Midian, he starts a new life. He marries a girl and looks after some sheep. Then one day, he sees a bush on fire, but it's not burning up. So he goes to have a look, and his whole life changes!

He walks towards the bush and he hears a voice call his name: "*Moses, Moses*".

"Here I am" he says.

- And God introduces himself. *"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."* (3:5)

In the middle of the desert, God calls Moses and he tells him 4 things – and although the call of Moses is a very special call, at a very special time, for a very special purpose, this call of God has a lot to teach us about how WE respond to God's call in our lives. So let's have a look at these 4 things:

- 1. First of all, God says "I am holy".

In other words, God is saying to Moses: "You better listen!" When the Holy God Almighty calls us, we better listen!

- 2. God says, verse 7: *"I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt... and I am concerned about their suffering."*

God says: I see. I hear. I'm concerned. We follow a God who is concerned about this world.

- 3. God says, verse 8: *"So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good a spacious land..."*

God says to Moses – I hear. I see. I'm concerned. And I'm going to do something. God says: "I'm coming down there, and I'm going to do rescue them." We have a God who is **involved** in our lives.

- 4. Then finally, God says the words Moses **didn't** want to hear. Verse 10: *"So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."*

God says: "I'm sending you Moses!" And for the next chapter, Moses tries to get out of it! God has a plan. And in that plan, he chooses to work with a human. God chooses to use Moses. God chooses to work **with** his people to rescue them. We have a God who is all powerful, and holy, and Lord over all. Yet he gets involved in our world, and chooses to work **with** us.

God chooses Moses, as a human, to go into Egypt and rescue his people.

And he does this again with Jesus. God sees the problem of sin in our world and he wants to get involved. He's concerned for us. But there is no human who can do what is needed. So **God** becomes human, in the person of Jesus, to save us.

But Jesus isn't the end of the plan! God is still concerned for our world and He still works **with us**. God wants people to put their trust in Jesus. And his plans involve us:

- In 2 Corinthians 5:20, Paul calls us “Christ's ambassadors”. He says God is making his appeal through us!
- In Matthew 5, Jesus calls us the light of the world. We are HIS light in this world.

We're God's ambassadors. We're God's light. Today, God calls US to work with him!

And today, maybe we have the same response to God? When God calls Moses, Moses argues with God. He says: Surely there's someone else who can do this. Surely I'm not the person you want. Why would Israel listen to me? Why would Pharaoh listen to me? Why would I listen to me? Who am I to do this? Who will I tell them sent me? A burning bush?

And this is the amazing thing we're taught in this chapter. God says to Moses –

- I AM SENDING YOU!

I will do the work. And I will use **you** to carry it out. You tell them the LORD sent you. What's my name? “I am who I am.” Verse 14. You tell them that the one who cannot be defined by any other means sent you. “I am who I am.”

God did the work. What did Moses do? He had faith and followed. Moses took off his sandals and stood before the Holy Lord Almighty and he **listened** to him and **followed** him. He didn't like it. He argued about it. He tried to get out of it. But he persevered and despite all of his doubts and uncertainties, he listened to God's call and he went. And God used him to free the Israelites.

- The question for us is this: **Does God call us today?**

And the answer is: YES! Absolutely.

But I think we often have a problem. We look for the burning bush. For a special sign. For a booming voice. And if we don't get that, then we just keep doing what we're doing. But I want suggest this – there is a burning bush right in front of us.

Moses was sent to bring people out of slavery in Egypt.

Jesus was sent to bring the people of this world out of slavery from sin and death. We are called to follow Jesus and be his ambassadors, because God is making his appeal through us. And there are three burning bushes, if you like, that tell us that:

- 1. God is calling us all today **in his word**.
- 2. And he's calling us **by His Spirit** who is alive in us.
- 3. And his calling us **through his people** – he's given us each other to encourage us to take up the call to make disciples of all nations.

How many more burning bushes do we need?!

- So let me finish by giving you one concrete example. Literally concrete! We have a new church building under construction. We believe, as a church, that God has led us to do this work. One question: Why? Why has God called us to do this and provided us with the means to do it? What is the point? What is his purpose?

Why has he led 115 adults to give over \$355,000 to this work? Is it for comfort? Is it for office space? Is it for more seating? Is it for space for our kids? Is it for disabled access? Is it for a decent kitchen and bathrooms? (This is sounding like an ad!)

Why? This building work is another burning bush. God leads us to build a bigger building. Why would he do that? Because: **Waitara has 12,000 people and less than 1000 know Jesus.** God is concerned about this suburb. He's calling us to go and be his ambassadors. After we build, then what?! That's when the hard work starts! This building work is another burning bush – a call to go!

- The question is: Will we take off our shoes and listen?
 1. Listen to **God's Word**.
 2. Listen to **God's Holy Spirit** in our life when he moves us to act.
 3. Listen to **God's people**, encouraging each other to use our gifts.

You and I stand in the presence of a Holy God. And God has already spoken, and is speaking: in his Word, by his Spirit and through his people.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning said this (from 'Aurora Leigh'):
*Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,*

I love that quote. God has not hidden his desire to work with us on this earth. He's called every one of us. But listen to the next lines:

***The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,
And daub their natural faces unaware More and more from the first
similitude.***

There are those who take off their shoes – who see and hear God.
And there are those who sit around plucking blackberries from the burning bush, unaware.

Let's take off our shoes now and pray for a heart that listens and a life that responds.