

God Is Calling

Ex. 3:1-4

Introduction:

1. On the two previous Sunday evenings we have been giving consideration to some thoughts about the life of Moses.
2. Phyllis and Paula have decided that they are not quite finished with that yet, and although I was planning a third lesson, this one is influenced by their encouragement.
3. The passage we have just read describes God's call to Moses. Additional aspects of the episode are described in the rest of chapter 3 and the first part of chapter 4. Stephen gives additional interpretive commentary in Acts 7:20-22.

Discussion:

- I. The account begins with God calling Moses from the midst of a bush that is not burned up. Moses answers with, "Here I am."
 - A. Such a response is typical when God calls. Note that it is "the angel of the Lord" (3:2; Acts 7:35) but equivalent to the voice of the Lord (Acts 7:31).
 1. Abraham (Gen. 22:1, 11); Jacob (Gen. 31:11; 46:2); Samuel (1 Sam. 3:4, 5, 6, 8); Isaiah (6:8) all responded this way.
 2. Saul was an exception (Acts 9:5). His response was, "Who are You?"
 - B. God's calling from a blazing bush that is not burned up is an amazing thing.
 1. The fire might suggest something of God's holiness, His consumption of sin.
 - a. John said of the one coming after him, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He will gather the wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:11-12).
 - b. But then there were "tongues as of fire distributing themselves" on the apostles in Acts 2 as they delivered the call of God to respond to the new king.
 2. In this bush, burning but not consumed, there is harnessed power. It is not just a "controlled burn." It is a "burning controlled."
 - C. Note that God calls Moses by name, twice!
 1. We may perceive God as far off and quite separated from ourselves, personally.
 2. We may perceive of Him relating to people generally or to His people particularly, but this encounter of a close kind is individually specific.
 3. Is this the way you perceive yourself and your responsibilities in God's kingdom? It may be easy to gloss over the call if we can generalize it in some way. "It is a call to all. Not me in particular."
 4. Sometimes God's call is very particular—ex. Jonah, Saul, Moses.
 - D. Even though Moses responds, "Here I am," he is not yet ready to take on the task that God has for him.
- II. He needs to know something of who it is that is calling him.

- A. God says, "Don't come near here."
 - 1. This is taking place in Horeb, the mountain of God, another way of saying, Mount Sinai.
 - 2. Probably a reference to Jubal Musa, an impressive mountain of 8600 feet, but it is not the place itself that is holy.
 - 3. It is the presence of God that makes the place holy.
- B. God identifies himself with Moses' heritage. "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."
 - 1. This called to mind the long history of God with Moses' forefathers.
 - 2. Do you consider this long history as part of who you are? Do you consider this as your heritage?
 - 3. Does it provoke you to awe?
 - 4. Moses "hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God."
- C. This heritage is extended into what God is about to do.
 - 1. "I have seen the affliction of My people."
 - 2. "I have given heed to their cry."
 - 3. "I am aware of their sufferings."
 - 4. Do you see God as aware of your situation?

III. God said, "I have come down . . ." This is a typical description of God intervening in the affairs of man (Babel: Gen. 11:5, 7; Sodom: 18:21).

- A. God is interacting with Moses, whom he intends to use to accomplish His purpose.
- B. He will deliver His people.
 - 1. From the power of the Egyptians.
 - 2. The oppressing power of the Egyptians.
- C. He will deliver them to a land oozing with milk and honey.
 - 1. Not a situation of utter despair, like they are in, but udder abundance.
 - 2. Illustration of milk oozing from fresh cow.
 - 3. Picture honey oozing from the bees' nest.
- D. God will overcome various peoples to give the land to His people.

IV. Moses doubts himself (3:10-4:17).

- A. "Who am I, that I should go?"
 - 1. I might respond to that as follows. "You are the ideal candidate."
 - 2. Stephen said . . .
 - a. Nurtured by Pharaoh's own daughter.
 - b. Educated in all the learning of the Egyptians.
 - c. A man of power in words and deeds (Acts 7:21-22).
 - 3. But Moses is out in the land of Midian pasturing the flock.
 - a. Hiding out? Hole up? Keeping his head down? "Content down on the farm?"
 - b. Retired? Too old? Too young? Too _____?
 - 4. God's answer: "Certainly I will be with you."
- B. "What is Your name?"
 - 1. This is a challenging element to interpret.

2. God has already identified Himself as “the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”
 3. Names in the ancient world were not just pleasant sounding syllables. They represented a special characteristic of the person. Ex. Abraham—father of nations.
 4. God statement, “I will be with you,” may be connected to God’s description of Himself—“I will be what I will be.” Cf. “I am who I am.” “Among the most discussed three words in all the Old Testament.” Problem in translating and problem in interpreting what it means. Maybe it was never intended as a serious answer to Moses’ question. “Don’t you worry about it. I will be what I will be.” There is a contrast throughout this text between Moses (“I”) and God (“I”).
 5. Yehweh is the memorial name. The tetragrammaton.
- C. “What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say?”
1. What if they doubt me?
 2. Three miracles.
 - a. Rod to serpent. Serpent to rod.
 - b. Hand leprous. Hand restored.
 - c. Water from Nile to blood on dry ground.
- D. “I have never been eloquent (a man of words).”
1. Certainly different than Stephen’s perception.
 2. Was it a teacher in Egypt that had told Moses he was not eloquent? One of his parents? Another child?
 3. Seems like he is perfectly capable of communicating with God.
 4. And if God can cause him to perform miracles surely God could overcome any speech problem.
 5. God’s answer, “Who made man’s mouth?” “I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.”
 6. Does Moses understand that God is the primary deliverer here and not himself?
 7. Even with God’s promise to be with his mouth and to teach him what to say Moses says, “Lord send the message by whomever, just not me.” “Well maybe I could, but I really don’t want to.”
- E. When God calls, it is not about your feelings in inadequacy. It is not about your desire. There are no unflawed servants of God. They make excuses. They fail to follow through. They are hesitant. They make mistakes. This is about the mission of God, not about how you feel about the work. It is not about how others respond—what questions they may ask, whether or not they believe or listen to you, nor about how eloquent you are. It is about doing the will of God!! It is about your loyalty to Him!!! We are looking for someone else to do the work. Ben Witherington called this “call forwarding.”
- F. God sends Aaron along.

Conclusion:

1. Do you see yourself as part of a long heritage of individuals used by God?
2. Do you see yourself as part of God’s plan?
3. What is God calling on you to do?
4. Ask yourself, “In what way am I avoiding the call of God on my life?”

