

Ps 105; Ex 3:1-15; Ro 12:9-21; Mt 16:21-28

The Name of God – 09-03-17

The psalmist says: *Oh, give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name. (Ps 105:1)* When you and I hear these words, we are called – “called to worship” – called to pray – called to serve. The call may come at any moment, day or night – in joy and in sorrow – in good times and bad times. Even as God calls us – we are meant to call upon God. We are called to respond to God’s Word.

I have a friend who lost her husband a couple of years ago. She was still grieving when her only daughter learned she had an inoperable brain tumor – and last year my friend said good-bye to her daughter as well. My friend Janice is practicing the spiritual discipline of mindfulness – mindful thanksgiving and praising God. She is living through a rough season. The last time I saw her, she explained with quiet joy that she is thanking the Lord for everything as she moves through her days: for the beauty of the place, for the birdsongs, the clouds, the people she meets in her work and in her travels. Janice is responding to the call: *Oh, give thanks to the*

Lord, call upon His name. It is her life-line. Jesus is her anchor in the storms of sorrow and loss.

This week, we catch up with Moses as he is making a new life in the land of Midian. He has embraced his identity as a Hebrew – the son of slaves in Egypt. And he experiences a powerful, life-altering call from God. He is in the Sinai. The Bible says he “came to Horeb, the mountain of God.” He has moved from being a prince of Egypt to being a sheep-herder for his father-in-law, Jethro. He was forced to flee after he killed an Egyptian. He has settled in the wilderness.

Something bright and shining catches Moses’ eye. Scripture says “the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush.” We know it was not a clump of sage or mesquite that had ignited – because it burns but is not consumed. Moses is strongly attracted by the “great sight” before him. Moses might have wished to find the explanation for the phenomenon. So often, we do the same – we long to understand and somehow to control what we experience. But God, who is about to break

into Moses' life, is uncontrollable – unpredictable – a free Being (capital B).

When God has the man's attention, He speaks to him: *Moses! Moses!* And our hero answers: *Here I am.*

There is something on God's heart. He calls Moses for a task – a work of wonder in the world, but not of the world.

On this particular historic day in this desolate place, God reveals God's self. The first disclosure – and the first time it is revealed, God says, *"Come no closer!"* There is real supernatural power in this burning bush. God does not wish to harm Moses by the glory of His Presence. God further reveals His mighty character. He commands Moses, *"Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."*

This is the first mention of holiness in Scripture.

In this desert encounter God says the very ground where He is has become holy by virtue of

that powerful Presence. Moses is to show respect by taking off his shoes.

God repeats the promise He gave Abraham – that His people will be lifted out of slavery and be led to the land flowing with milk and honey. And God commissions His chosen leader, Moses, to perform the task. It is a God-size vision. No person could hope to accomplish the miracle of bringing the nation of Israel out of bondage and into their own country. God has seen it, and God will perform it – in and through Moses.

Moses is unsure. He hesitates. Would you or I be more bold or courageous than he was? But, he asks God the vital question – the question that had great weight and importance in that ancient time: *When they ask me, “Who has sent you? What is His name? What shall I say to them?”*

God speaks His name: I AM THAT I AM. This might also be translated I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE. Then, God, the Great I AM, puts His Being in the context of His Word – His Covenant: “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of

Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.” (v 15)

The fiery angel in the burning bush brings this great good news to Moses – and through Moses, to you and me.

God breaks into the life of this world. He brings the utter power of His holy love – His holy justice. We are His representatives to all whose lives touch ours.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews says:

“...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for (the one) who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” (Heb 11:6)

Set your mind upon these divine things – call upon the name of the Lord. Amen.