

The Burning Bush Exodus 3:1-10

God specialises in restoring failures – Like Moses.

His premature plan led him to shepherd a flock of sheep rather than deliver the people of God from slavery.

A prince of Egypt to the obscurity of being a dirty smelly lowly shepherd. Genesis 46:33 tells us, "all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians." Not even of his own sheep but his father in laws.

A man who had once set his sights on leading a nation learnt the virtues of three greater roles – to be a good husband, to be a good father, to be a good worker.

Feeling dejected and a failure he began a 40 year wait. But God is in no hurry, nor should we be That's some lesson in patience. He spent many hours in the wilderness alone with God and the sheep,

Ancient legend says that Moses ran after a lamb that had become separated and become lost, eventually finding it exhausted and hungry. After finding water for the animal he hoists it on his shoulders and returns to the flock. If he showed so much compassion for one lamb, how much more compassion will he show to my people, so when Moses claimed he wasn't up to the job, God knew otherwise.

Passage begins an another ordinary working day. The day on which God was going to begin to change history was just an ordinary day in the story of desert folk.

Moses received no advance warning. If God intends to intervene in our lives in a special way, often it will be during the ordinary humdrum routine of the day. Need always to be alert.

Similar context Heb 13:2 "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it."

As he carries on with his normal tasks – stopping the sheep wandering too far, caring for any injured or caught thorns or bushes.

A remarkable sight catches his attention. Or to use a management term a low probability, high impact event. Nothing to do with shepherding, or even as an ex-prince of Egypt.

A pretty ordinary thorn bush – Set alight by the sun in this dry parched land. Any old thorn bush will do – God did not need some marvellous oak. Naturalists tell us that thorns are abortive branches, which if developed would bring forth leaves and fruit. This humble bush, which possessed neither beauty nor comeliness, became, temporarily, the abode of Jehovah, and from it He revealed Himself to Moses.

BUT what was so different the bush was burning without turning to ashes. Not a short flare up and out – But burning. It was actually burning for Moses benefit. Nothing strange about a spontaneous fire and only a cause for concern if it happens when there is a gust of wind to spread it far and wide. This day all was still, a few moments and it would be a no more bush. But it kept on burning! Curious Moses goes to have a look.

“God chose the small and the despised burning bush as his medium of revelation, and he waited to see how sensitive Moses was toward the insignificant and small things of life before he invested him with larger tasks” W C Kaiser in Swindoll (new) p 45

“Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt” (AV Ex.3:2,3). Here was a wonder which all the magicians of Pharaoh could not produce. Here was something which baffled all the wisdom of this Egyptian ex-prince, and indeed would baffle all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Here was a manifestation of God Himself. It was, the Shekinah glory which was now displayed before the wondering eyes of Moses. This, we take it, is the meaning of "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame" here manifested in the Shekinah-glory.

The "Angel of the Lord" was none other than the Lord Jesus in theophanic manifestation, for in verse 4 He is called the "Lord" and "God."

"Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

The Burning Bush may also have been a figure of the nation of Israel. At the time the Lord appeared here to Moses, the Hebrews were suffering in "the iron furnace of Egypt" (Deut. 4:20), but fiercely as the flames had burned against them for fully forty years, they had not been consumed. The fires of persecution had blazed hotly, yet have they been marvellously, miraculously sustained. And why? As God Himself was in the Burning Bush, so He had been with Israel, He has been with the Jews all through their chequered history.

What out of the ordinary happenings have you encountered? Did you dismiss it as a chance or a co-incidence? When God calls are we listening for him? Or does he need a foghorn to get our attention? How many of us turn off our paths to question inconsistencies?

Moses turns and looks at this phenomenon. It is not until we stop and start to look in God's direction does he start to speak. An unfamiliar and authoritative voice calls "Moses, Moses". Moses simply talks to the bush and answers "Here I am".

God speaks a warning to Moses (v5). How would you feel coming face to face as it were with the God you had let down 40 years ago. Terror, fear, humiliation, guilt – he hid his face.

Do we appreciate The Holiness of God

It was the presence of God that made it holy. God's supernatural presence gives ordinary surroundings extraordinary status.

Then God declares his identity (V6) Historically the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Moses reaction – he hid his face (v6)

God speaks of his awareness and concern for his people v 7-9

Maybe Moses wondered if his actions had doomed Israel to slavery forever. What joy to know God had not stopped caring for his people, after his failure – but why was God telling him?

Because Moses for you – Opportunity knocks. (See if he takes the money or opens the box next week)

Why is God responding to them? Why is he making this move at this time? What have "My people" finally done?

They cried out.

They cried out to God instead of crying out to Ra or Thot or Isis or any of the other gods of Egypt.

They had finally cried out to Yahweh, the God of their forefathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

He saw their affliction and had compassion for them.

This is the God who doesn't care about your track record. He is a God who only cares about your relationship with Him.

You cry out to God for help, and He doesn't care what your past has been, He will help.

He is trying to tell Moses, "I don't care what your past has been, I am a God who is going to help."

Do we appreciate The faithfulness of God?

Do we enjoy a close relationship with the God who spoke with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – and Moses?

Not "Do you have religion?"-because following the rules of religion will never make anyone righteous before God. But "Do you have a right relationship with God?"

Have we believed the message of the way of salvation which God has established?

Do we see that following **a religion** and having **a relationship** with God Himself are two different things?

Even if we have failed God, let him down, ignored him. God still wants us to be attentive to his voice & to make ourselves available to him.

Even in the dark desert days we can be confident that he is totally aware, thoroughly involved and in complete control of your situation – if we will let him.

Do we appreciate The mercy of God

God manifested another characteristic when He appeared to Moses in the fire that blazed in the bush. The characteristic is **mercy**. God is not only the Holy One and the Faithful One, but He is also **the Merciful One**. That is why God said to Moses concerning the people of Israel,

"I have indeed **seen** the misery of my people in Egypt. I have **heard** them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am **concerned** about their suffering. 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 and spacious land..." (*Exod. 3:7,8*)

Why did God plan to liberate the people of Israel and lead them to a good land?

Did the Israelites deserve God's mercy?

Were they better than other nations? No, they were not!

Why then did God purpose to deliver them and bless them so?

Only because of His faithfulness and His mercy. Yes, God is **the Merciful One!**

Then God calls Moses (10) Moses had failed when he tried to work in his own strength – now at the age of 80 God says to Moses, I want to set you on fire for me – to use you as I use this bush.

In human terms you would be consumed, like this bush, but I can protect you and use you. I can sustain you.

How did Moses respond? We will see next week - "I am more afraid of the circumstances than I am of the God of those circumstances. I am more afraid of people over there than I am of the Creator who made them."

He has no desire to get involved again with people who have rejected him and others who want to kill him. If he had seen the post of deliverer of Israel advertised in the Midian telegraph he certainly wouldn't have applied. Been there, done it, got the T-shirt, and it wasn't any fun.

Conclusion

A failure, useless – God can restore and bring each one back (or into) service.

Concerning Gods call & purpose we can

1. Run ahead before we are sent. Impatience. Moses chose this option at the age of 40. The consequences were disastrous. Self and BBI
2. Insecurity. Retreat after failure – run away, hide – feelings of insecurity. How unlike song, Be bold, be strong, for the Lord thy God is with you. I am not afraid, I am not dismayed.
3. Resist the call when it does come – inconvenient? Not in our plans – too big, not big enough? PRIDE or I can't, even with God, let feelings of inferiority rule. Afraid of the consequences of obedience – what God might ask of me to do?
4. The mature response - Wait patiently, constantly listening for God and to God. Seeking his will and

plan, even at 80, and responding obediently, in the little things and the big things.

Is God attempting to get your attention
Is he the first commitment
An act of obedience,
sin to deal with
relationship to put right
something to do – an area of service
new direction as individual, or the church

Are you available to God and for God to use?

Rejoice you know **the Lord**.

Rejoice you can recognise His **holiness**.

Rejoice in His **faithfulness** (he keeps His covenants)

Rejoice for you have received His **mercy**.

Rejoice for you believe His Word.

Rejoice you have entered into a close relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and know the Lord who spoke to Moses from the burning bush?

Other material

Ezekiel (10:18) saw “the glory of the Lord depart from over the threshold of the temple” in punishment for Israel’s sin and idolatry.

New Temple Ezek.43:4-5 “The glory of the Lord entered the temple through the gate facing east. Then the spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the lord filled the temple.”

Moses begins a dialogue with God. Although shaking with fear before this Holy Being, he proceeds to offer five objections as to why he will not and cannot go. This is what is known as playing Russian roulette with God. What is intriguing though is he won't go because #1 he fears Pharaoh, #2 he fears the Egyptians and #3 he fears the rejection of his people. Who doesn't he seem to fear? God

Have you ever thought about that? When God calls you to something and you object or drag your feet, you are saying, "I am more afraid of that which you have called me to or that person you have called me to go to than I am of You, the Lord God Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth." Now that is a pretty ridiculous statement. But that is exactly what we do all the time. When I refuse to step out by faith when God calls me to do something, I am saying, "I am more afraid of my circumstances than I am of the God of those circumstances. I am more afraid of that creature over there than I am of the Creator who made him. I am more afraid of the attacks of Satan or the problems of the flesh than I am of the God who has already given me victory over them."