



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“TWO BURNING QUESTIONS BY A BURNING BUSH”

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Text: Exodus 3:1-14
Date: October 15, 1972

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on October 15, 1972.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Exodus 3:1-14).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would "fill in" the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

The hymns that week were "It Is Good To Sing Thy Praises," "My Faith Looks Up To Thee," and "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah."

In the bulletin notes, the congregation was thanked for their participation for the Donation Visitation Day for the Presbyterian Homes.

There was an Inquirers class during both services. The Christian Life seminars were:

- Living within the Family
- School of Prayer (led by Reverend John Beams)
- Let's Look at the Issues: U.S. Foreign Policy
- Let's Look at the Bible: God Requires Righteousness
- Builders Class
- Study of Interpersonal Relationships

There was a card with the sermon noting: A commitment to Christ gives one the freedom to live or die with courage with an image that represented the burning bush. It also included the parable of the frog returned to his real nature as a prince through the kiss of a maiden. Dr. Galbreath references it in the sermon.

I. Moses in Exile

A. Moses, having murdered the Egyptian, had made a new life for himself in the wastelands of Sinai.

1. His life as a prince under Pharaoh, eating at the table with rulers of the land, receiving the honors due a member of Pharaoh's own family -- these were long past.
2. But so also was that nightmare in which he had murdered the slave foreman, and his flight into exile.
3. Now living as a Bedouin, he had made a new life and found contentment.
4. His thoughts seldom went back to Miriam and family and the enslaved people out of whom he had arisen.

B. Then came the confrontation with God at the place of the burning bush.

1. "I am the God of your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I have seen the affliction of my people...and am come down to deliver them...Come, I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring forth my people out of Egypt."

2. "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?"

a) *There was a day when he had friends in court.*

(1) But since the killing, none would dare to admit to his friendship.

(2) And in forty years, who would even remember past favors he had given?

b) *Should he go as a Bedouin herdsman, why should Pharaoh listen?*

(1) He could see nothing to qualify himself to be savior of his people.

c) *"I will be with you"...*

(1) With God, all the years in Egypt and Sinai were prelude to the special task for which God had been preparing him in a very special way.

3. "Who are you? What is your name?"

a) *"God of your fathers..."*

(1) Moses remembered childhood stories told by Miriam of El Shaddai who had brought them out of Ur.

(2) Considering the present state of his people, the claim to be god of his fathers was no great recommendation.

(a) Would not Pharaoh's god be mightier than the god of Pharaoh's slaves?

b) *The name of God.*

(1) To have the name of one's god was to have a handle on the powers of that god.

(a) To have the name of a god of fertility gave the key to fertility.

(2) "Yahweh" -- Tell them "I am" sent you.

(a) The god with no handle, who will not be used.

(b) It does not matter whether men believe in God, but the question is whether God believes in men.

C. Two questions:

1. There are the most basic questions any man asks -- the questions that arise in the depth of crisis.

II. Who Am I?

A. I am homo sapiens.

1. At Ghost Ranch Museum is a shaft of dirt and stone, a profile of the cliff that rises on the horizon.

2. The cliff -- and that pillar is the history of the creation of the earth.

a) At the base is the tuff spewed out by the primeval volcanoes, and upon which, layer upon layer, our earth emerged.

b) In this time shaft, the time of man is represented by a sheet of paper.

3. As modern men, like Moses, we find little consolation in our past.

B. We go to the psychiatrist to ask who we are.

1. But the psychiatrist, too, is man -- a twisted man among twisted men, using twisted tools.

2. The measure is of limited value.

C. Parable of the frog.

1. We don't know who we really are until we are loved -- till someone trusts us and accepts us.
2. We don't know who we really are until we discover that God Himself loves and accepts us.
 - a) *It was God with Moses that transformed all his past into the role of deliverer.*
3. The man without a faith is not truly a man.
 - a) *Far from being a crutch to our manhood, faith is the catalyst that enables our manhood to come alive.*
 - b) *It transforms our frogness into our Princedom as children of God.*

III. Who is God?

A. The "God of your fathers" has not consoled us.

1. The record of our fathers is a checkered one at best.
 - a) *God's credentials are not dependent on our fathers' virtue.*
2. "Faith of our fathers" does not stir our children.
 - a) *They wish to discover God for themselves, not a hand-me-down God.*
3. God was not on trial at the burning bush. "I am who I am."
 - a) *Moses was free to take Him or leave Him.*
 - b) *The alternative was faith or unfaith.*

B. The reality of God would be found in the living it out.

1. The arena for God's self-revelation is the life of the world.
2. God is described best by verbs, not adjectives.
 - a) *The Bible is the story of what God did, not who He was.*
 - b) *Gilbert Chesterton, seeking a faith, turned to the Eastern cults.*
 - (1) The images of Buddha are fat and sleek, with eyes closed.

(2) The images of Christ were in the midst of human pain, with eyes wide open to the world as it is.

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading: Exodus 3:1-14

Exodus 3:1 and 2 say: ¹ Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. ² And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

- Do you think such a sight was more shocking then or would be now?

Exodus 3:3 and 4 say: ³ And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. ⁴ And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

- Would you have responded or would you have left the mountain?

Exodus 3:5 and 6 say: ⁵ And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. ⁶ Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

- Why do you think there is specific mention of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Why not just Abraham as in other settings?
- Moses is speaking with God of the Old Testament. Do you think he would have been equally afraid to look upon the God of the New Testament?

Exodus 3:5 and 6 say: ⁷ And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; ⁸ and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. ⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

- In the context of the history of the time, why do you think so many tribes were mentioned?

Exodus 3:11 says: ¹¹ And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

- It seems normal to feel unworthy. What reasons would you give God for being the wrong person for the job?

Exodus 3:12 says: ¹² And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

- Even knowing God had given you a specific mission, what misgivings or fears might you still have? How would you get over them?

Exodus 3:13 and 14 say: ¹³ And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? ¹⁴ And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

- What does "I am" mean to you as the way God tells us who he is?

Study Questions -- Part II

Sermon :

I.A.4. Are there things in your life that should be important to you but that don't often sit at the forefront of your thoughts?

I.B.2. If God said this to you, rather than focusing on why you might feel unworthy, what might you list as reasons why you were chosen to do His work?

I.B.2.c. Have there been times in your life when you have clearly felt God with you? What has that feeling helped you to achieve or accomplish?

I.B.3.a. If you had to describe God to someone who didn't know him as "God of your fathers" how would you explain the connection that has existed for so many generations?

I.B.3.b Different Christians start their prayers in different ways. What is your favorite name to call God?

II. What terms do you use to describe yourself? Do they relate to God? Your family? Your work?

II.A.1. -- There is a note: 6'3"

III. How can we do a better job of helping the next generation to understand God's faithfulness to His people throughout the centuries?

II.B.2. What verbs would you use to describe God?

II.B.2.b.2. How does it change your relationship with God knowing that Christ saw the world through human eyes?

III. There is not as clear an ending for this sermon as there is for others. How would you have ended it?