

The opening verses of the third chapter of Exodus reveal a source of God's power for our lives. This summer our studies of the heroes and heroines of the Hebrew scripture have revealed special qualities to us. First, we saw the strength of Deborah, then the hope of Ezekiel, and last week the witness of Micah. Today we see Moses receiving a source of God's power. This source of power is available to us as well. Let's see what the opening verses of the third chapter of Exodus tell about this source of power.

I invite you to notice what Moses is doing when God calls him to be the liberator of the children of Israel who are slaves in Egypt. Exodus 3, verse 1 reads "Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian." Moses is living a responsible life. He is at work and therefore supporting his family as he cares for the flock. God's special call to you and me oftentimes happens when we are in the midst of carrying out our normal responsibilities.

Think about it. What were Peter, James and John, the first disciples, doing when Jesus called them? That's right; they were fishing, doing their job. God oftentimes calls us as we are in the midst of attending to our responsibilities in life. God knows, as we do, that if you want to get a job done, ask a busy person! Caring for our responsibilities is a clue to God's power for our living.

Let's continue with verse one as it says, "he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and comes to Horeb, the mountain of God." I love the literary genius of the Biblical authors.

Do you see the literary device of foreshadowing that is happening in the latter part of verse one? Moses led his flock beyond the "wilderness" to Horeb, "the mountain of God." Just as Moses leads his flock of sheep beyond the wilderness he will later lead the flock of Israelites beyond the wilderness. Where to? Mount Sinai. Mount Sinai is a different name for Mount Horeb. Special things happen at Horeb/Sinai, the call of Moses and later the giving of the Ten Commandments.

What does this foreshadowing found in our passage mean for you and me? God can take our ordinary Mount Horeb surrounding and use them for very special Mount Sinai purposes.

Then in verse 2 we read, "the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire..." Does that remind you of some other passage of scripture when God is about to do a great thing through a group of people? Remember, Pentecost Day, the opening verses of Acts 2 in the New Testament. Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit came "as of fire" and rested on the disciples.

Divine movement is sometimes remembered in scripture as a flame that sets us "on fire" to do something special.

I love this next passage. The bush is burning. Moses sees it and is fascinated by it. Then verse 4 reads, "When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, Moses, Moses!" What does this say to you?

I think it says that God's call to us is in connection with that which fascinates or excites us. I think that is why I am here as your pastor. When the District Superintendent called me to see is I had interest in coming to St. Paul two thoughts came to mind. First, St. Paul was the church I was baptized in as an infant. It would be cool to serve the church where I was baptized. Second, the first church I serve at the beginning of my ministry was in an urban setting on the west side of Chicago. Ever since that time I have missed serving in an urban setting and St. Paul provided that opportunity for me. God know what excites us. This is another clue to finding God's power in our lives. We find power in those things that excite us and give us a sense of purpose.

Now, let's get back to Moses. To do something special in life, that God is calling us to do, we must first demonstrate a willing spirit. We see this in Moses in verses 5 and 6. First Moses says, "Here I am." This indicates a willingness and readiness to follow divine direction. Second, when he removes his sandals Moses is acknowledging that what is happening is sacred. Your presence here today indicates that you are open to God moving in your life in a special way.

Is that true?

In verses 7-11 God explains to Moses that he has seen the suffering of the children of Israel in the midst of their slavery in Egypt. Then God reveals the divine game plan which has Moses delivering the slaves out of Egypt and leading them into a "good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey..."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go..." Oftentimes, this is the human response when God calls us to something that is special, that will fill our life with great meaning, but is a bit different. The tough part is not hearing God's call (although that can be challenging), or verifying God's call (although that can be difficult), but it is doing that which God has called us to do.

The tough part is overcoming the dynamic of homeostasis.

Our default mechanism is to do that which we are accustomed to doing. That is why change in any part of our life is so difficult. Homeostasis calls us back to the routine, regular and recognizable. Therefore, when God's calls us beyond our comfort zone we have a tough time taking the plunge. Yet, Moses does it and so can we. Being called beyond our comfort zone is a clue to God's power for our living.

I love the final verse of our lesson today. This is where we find a source of God's power in our lives. Moses is looking for a little reassurance that being the liberator of the slaves in Egypt is what he should do and that God will be with him.

Please hear the divine response from verse 12 of chapter 3 in Exodus, "this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

Did you hear that? The sign is this, "once you are back here with the people worshipping God on this mountain you will know it was right!" What kind of a sign is that? Once it happens you know it has happened.

Confusing? Yes, but this reveals a source of God's power for our lives. Are you ready to hear it?

Visualization, God is into visualization. God was a couple millenniums ahead of sport psychologists and life coaches that help athletes, executives, and other purpose driven people visualize the end result of any task.

God was telling Moses not to think of where he was that day, standing alone on Mount Horeb, or the many things he had to do to liberate the slaves. God wanted Moses to envision the children of Israel standing with him at the base of the mountain. God wanted Moses to see the people free from slavery and ready to complete their journey to the land flowing with milk and honey.

It is ability to continually see the fulfilled vision that enables us to negotiate any obstacle that arises along the way. If you remember, in the Exodus story there were more than a few obstacles including a non-cooperative Pharaoh and a raging Red Sea among other impediments. The secret to tapping God's power in our lives is visualization!

What is God calling you to do at this stage of your life?

Please take a moment and visualize it.

That is where the power is found, discerning God's vision for our life and following that vision.

What does God have envisioned for St. Paul UMC?

Please take a moment and visualize it...

That is where the power is found, discerning God's vision for our life and following that vision.

Like Moses, we know there will be some hurdles to overcome as we address God's vision for our life. Yet, we know the Exodus story and how God's vision pulled Moses and the children of Israel forward. In faith, we also know that God is able to pull us forward here at St. Paul.

As we read in Exodus 3 of the burning bush talking to Moses please remember that God is also calling for your attention. When we stop and give God our attention, as Moses did, we too will experience the power that comes from the divine vision for our lives. Amen.