

K-482 True Sending for True Ministry (1 of 2)

by Art Katz

The sermon explores the essential nature of being sent by God for true ministry, highlighting the significance of preparation, obedience, and divine direction.

Duration: 57:26

Scripture: Exodus 2:11, Exodus 3:2, Exodus 3:4, Joshua 5:13-15, Matthew 6:33, Acts 7:25, Acts 7:30

Topics: "True Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not acting solely in response to need. He highlights the danger of the church being deceived in the last days by constantly running after various needs without seeking God's guidance. The speaker uses the example of Moses being sent by God to deliver the Israelites, not because Moses saw the need, but because God saw it. He warns against presumption and the temptation to rely on flashy marketing and hype rather than seeking the true revelation of God. The speaker also expresses admiration for those who faithfully serve in humble and inconspicuous ways, recognizing the necessity of such service before the more glorious things.

Transcript

And that which is not sent of God cannot accomplish the purposes of God. And that which he sends, he empowers. So we're just going to examine the anatomy of sending, the root of apostolicity, by one of the first examples given in Scripture, and not even the New Testament, but the Old.

Namely, the commissioning and the sending of Moses out of the burning bush. So Lord, we know that you're jealous over that word. It's a word that designates yourself as the high priest and the apostle of our confession.

And we know that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And we're asking, my God, for a renewal of the depths of the meaning of that word. For we say with one heart and one soul that we desire to attain to it, my God.

Not that we might all be called to it, but we want to be part, my God, of what makes that up. The configuration of things apostolic that makes the church the church. So grant us, my God, insight, revelation, and understanding.

And confront us by the text and meet us, my God, in the text, in the depths of the vicarious possibilities, my God, that are for us, in what is described there, between Moses and you at the burning bush. We bless you, Lord, and we thank you for the privilege. And we look to you now for an unveiling by your Spirit, in Jesus' name.

Amen. So let's look at Exodus 3. Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

And the angel of the Lord 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. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

When the Lord 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. And he said, Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. 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. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people, which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. 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 Canaanites and the Hittites, and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

Now therefore behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me, and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppressed them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. 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? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee, and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt.

You shall serve God upon this mountain. 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? 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.

And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you. This is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. Amen.

Well, I haven't counted the number of times that the word sent is employed. Five. Five times.

Well, that's no coincidence either. It would do us well just to underline the word sent. Sent, sent, sent, sent.

The root of apostolos, sent one. So, what can we glean by this encounter with God, and what principles have an eternal validity that are not just an Old Testament phenomenon, but have an abiding application that would give us an insight into him whom God sends. Why did this take place where it did? On the backside of the desert? And why was there a forty year preparation in the wilderness that preceded it?

And why did God wait for Moses to turn aside to sea before he called him? What if he had not turned? The whole subsequent heilsgeschichte, which is the German word that means salvation history, English doesn't have a word for it, would have been lost.

This one critical point, that this man turned aside to sea, when God saw that he turned aside to sea, he called him out of the midst of the burning bush, Moses, Moses. There's something so critical, this is the whole pivot. Everything that I'm asking comes in finally to this vortex, this pivotal one critical thing, when he saw that Moses turned aside to sea, he called him.

We're going to explore that. Why is that the whole pivotal turning point that has to do with the commissioning of Moses? And if he had passed on by and had chosen not to turn aside to sea, what then would have been the subsequent history of the faith? What would have been the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt? And if there had been no deliverance, what would have been the likelihood of the Messianic line that had its expression in Jesus to have come to the fulfillment of bringing him into the earth? You can't, I'm not saying enough, I'm just hinting, at the enormous weight of what impinged on a single moment's obedience, a single moment's freely rendered act that could not be compelled. God didn't even tell him to turn aside to sea.

Something out of the man himself, something of what the man is, maybe at the heart of what the man is, was critical at that juncture. And if God does not find that in us, we can forget any kind of apostolic commissioning, sending, or doing. So we want to invest ourselves in this and lay it there and try to understand what is contained here, altogether precious.

One of the questions I'm going to ask is, what parallel do you see between the commissioning of Paul and the commissioning of Moses? Two great apostles, if I can say that. Two great master builders. Two men who were key to the purposes of God to bring the people up and out of slavery and into a land flowing with milk and honey.

It's not enough to deliver out, it's also to bring in. It's not just to rescue people from the Egyptians, but to confront the Pharaoh, which is ultimate confrontation. So this is the Moses who had, 40 years earlier, sought out of his own self-initiated conduct to bring good to his people, and it eventuated in the death of one Egyptian, hastily buried in the sand, and Moses' requirement to flee that brought them into this wilderness.

And 40 years later comes the moment of encounter and the true fulfillment of his calling. You know what I would ask? To what degree must failure precede a true appropriation of one's calling? And if that's true, was it true for Paul? And is it true for us? And are we willing for the humiliation of failure out of our best well-meaning intentions that God himself will allow and establish in order that out of the humiliation and the debris and death of that failure, the mortification and the humiliation can be formed the man that God can send. That probably could not have been formed in any other way.

There's something about failure, particularly when it's born out of the best well-meaning intentions to serve God, that does a depth of work in the human soul that nothing else can obtain. You say, well, why haven't more of us failed? Because we have not... What's the word? Tried. We've not sought.

We've not had apostolic intention. We've not had large intentions for God. And we've played it close to the vest.

We've been timid. And nothing ventured, nothing gained. And to avoid the humiliation of failure, we have not attempted bravely to succeed.

We've just kind of gotten by. So I like something about the largeness of soul that is to be seen both in Paul and Moses. It's that largeness of soul in Paul that was not satisfied that this heresy called the way be allowed to exist, but sought authorization from the religious class of his time to seek out and to imprison and to persecute this heretical body.

Can you see that? If Paul or Saul were more of a come see, come saw, well, these guys will pass away, I doubt if he would have been apostolic timber. T-I-M-B-R-E. Not T-I-M-B-E-R.

You know that word? It was a qualification. He was in error as Moses was in error. But the error was born out of an intensity of heart for God.

And when God will find such a one as that, even in his error, there's more potential for an enemy of God with that kind of heart than those who purport to be his friends who have not that intensity and will just drift and get by, and whose lives are completely lackluster and undistinguished for God, never threatened by failure because they never attempt largely to succeed. So there's a remarkable correlation between Paul and Moses, and I'm wondering if that's not true in other men of an apostolic kind. Peter failed colossally, dismally, but out of that great failure came a great apostle.

Maybe we ought to take a look at that failure in chapter 2. In verse 11, It came to pass in those days when Moses was grown that he went out unto his brethren and looked on their burdens. And he spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way.

And when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. What can you learn from that that shows that though Moses himself was called of God, and in Stephen's statement in Acts 7, talks about that he thought that he was called to be their deliverer, that what is indicated here is a man not yet qualified to be it. However well-meaning, what does that statement show that he yet lacks? As good exegetes, as those who draw the meaning out of what is spoken in these verses.

He looked this way and that. And when he saw no man, he did what he did. What's lacking there? Lack the fear of God.

He lacked the awareness of God. His whole posture was horizontal. He saw, he acted.

He looked this way and that way. He saw no man. But there's no consideration of looking up.

There's no consideration of God. And merely because you see something that needs to be rectified, are you justified in doing it? There's probably nothing more inimical that means opposed to the purposes of God than the well-meaning intentions of men perpetrated in their own religious and human zeal. This is so evident.

It was so evident with a soul that had to fail in his zeal to protect the interests of God that he found himself persecuting God. It's evident with Moses. Why is it not evident to the Church? I would say something like this.

Something about the whole structure of Church life and the necessity to perform something to justify its existence and its perpetuation compels it to act without waiting. There's no greater death than waiting. And

waiting is at the heart of priestliness.

I don't know if we'll speak about this in these days, but we need to. We'll have to come back for another two and a half week session. But after all of the things that constituted the ordination of priests and they are mind-rending and exacting and would drive a man up the wall in the fastidious attention to detail of washings and blood and anointings and garments and all of that whole procedure, the last requirement was waiting seven days at the door of the tent of meeting.

They did not commence their priestly activity until seven days of waiting were fulfilled. What does the number seven imply? Complete waiting. Complete for what? For dying.

That's right. Don't be numerical. Don't be American and quantitative in your mindset.

Seven is a symbolic and significant number of completion. And what was completed was the last dying of not man's evil or carnality, but his well-meaning religious intention to do for God. And until that dies, is there any true priestly service? And if it's not priestly, how is it apostolic? Jesus is the high priest and the apostle of our confession.

The first precedes the last. Impatience, self-will, religious ambition, the necessity to do and to be seen doing, to be recognized and to be acknowledged is death to the purposes of God. Yes, you may have slain an Egyptian, but so what? What has come of it but your own expulsion and flight? So, the partial answer to the question, why haven't the churches recognized this principle? There's something about the makeup of the modern church, the Western church, and especially the American church, that is impatient to perform and to do.

I mean, how else does it justify itself? And if it's not doing and not performing and not having a program, how do you pacify the congregation? Why should they continue to come? I mean, there's got to be some kind of an action, some kind of a program. What are you doing? I think the most taunting mock that you can put to a church or to its leadership is, what are you doing? And I think it's the mock that we had to bear here in our earliest years when there was no doing, by just simply knocking about and wrestling out the issues of faith and life and community. Well, what are you doing? And how much support did we lose because we were not doing and not performing? This is a great foundational, priestly principle.

So, let this register. Moses is a called one. Maybe we ought to look at that and not just paraphrase it, but look at the Holy Spirit's statement of that in Acts 7, in Stephen's summary of the history of Israel.

Okay, let's start from 20. In which time Moses was born and was exceeding fair and nourished up in his father's house three months, and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up and nourished him for her own son. Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in word and deed and in deeds.

And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. Let's not rush. Let's pause.

Let the sink seep into our spirits. Full forty years old is not yet eighty years old. Maybe full humanly, full of human sap and human vigor.

The very thing that needs to die if God is to be all in all and be the actual performer of the apostolic works to those whom he sends. In this 80th year, when God confronts Moses at the burning bush and sends

him, what does Moses say about that that we've already read? Who am I that you should send me? He's a nebuchadnezzar. He's a nebuchadnezzar.

You know that word? A broken one. A man who has no assurance of his qualification. He has been completely emptied out of all of his human qualification which was supreme and sublime.

Both genealogically, being a Hebrew of the Hebrews and of the priestly tribe and also a prince in Egypt and versed in all of their wisdom and knowledge. And yet 40 years after he was full, the same man confronted by God and sent says, Who am I that you should send me? How many people think that Moses is just being self-deprecating? Oh, do you mean me? Oh, really? No, I don't know. Is this a man who is really emptied of himself? Has not a whit of confidence that he could perform anything let alone deliver an entire people out of bondage? I want to say that everything that I understand about God makes me to make this statement.

No man more qualified than him who believes in his deepest heart that he's without qualification. And maybe the whole preliminary work of God is to disqualify us before we can be qualified. Did you put that in your notes? Isn't that a paradox? And isn't it contrary, getting back to the question, why doesn't the church understand this, to the whole religious plan, the whole religious mindset? It's absolutely wasteful.

Here's a man full of vigor at the age of 40, ready to do great things for God. How many of us are chomping at the bit and ready to go, to make our mark for God? And God does not think it lavish, wasteful, or extravagant to give him another 40 years of waiting in the wilderness till he's completely emptied out, and then he calls him. This is classic saints.

I can't tell you how grateful I am for this sending of God, of Moses out at Burning Bush. It is altogether timeless in all of the profound principles of God that have to do with sending. That have to do with that which is apostolic.

Okay, back in Acts 7, when he was full 40 years old, he came to his heart to visit his brethren. Seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him and lynched him. That was repressed multi-Egyptian.

Here's the key verse, verse 25. For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them, but they understood not. Doesn't that sound like a bit of the upstart of presumption that a man who is assured of a cause and was he called? Yes, he was called, but it was not yet time to fulfill it.

So here are a few things to take into our consideration. Merely because you see something that deserves to be rectified or made right is not a justification necessarily to perform it. You cannot act in response to need.

Now, if you don't have that in your notes, you're fired from today. That has got to go in. You cannot act in response to need.

That will be the last day's deception of the church. Shouldn't we be doing something? Look at this need and look at that need and how about that need? It will be running off all over the place like chickens without a head, mediating to needs. In the text that we read to begin with, Moses is not sent because he sees the need.

Who saw the need? God. Their cry has ascended up to me. I have seen their affliction.

Therefore, I send you. You don't go on the basis that you have seen it. You go on the basis that I have sent you.

What a difference! And what a salvation from the ambiguity of running here and there and hindering you. So many good things that need to be done. So many needful things.

Shouldn't I be doing something? Those that are led by the Spirit, these are the sons of God. And it's going to be a tremendous temptation to see whether we are that kind of son. What if the Spirit does not get you to intervene? You see it.

It cries out to you. You're well able to perform something, but the Spirit has not indicated or signified that you should. To what will you respond? Particularly when others are watching to see what your response will be.

After all, you're a leader in the body of Christ and you're godly and men are looking to you to do something. And if you don't do it, what will be the reproach for your failure? And how much of that is consciously or unconsciously a profound factor in motivating us to do? I'll give you a supreme example of what a son of God is. That when Jesus heard that his friend Lazarus was sick, he remained two days longer where he was, sufficient for his friend to die.

While all of his disciples looked on, hearing that Lazarus was sick, and knowing that Bethany was only a stone's throw from Jerusalem where Jesus' life was threatened, and right away put two and two together and thought, our master is a coward and is afraid to risk his neck, even to deliver his friend because it would put him in a place of jeopardy. And Jesus answered them, not a word. So you know what this is beginning to show us? The depth of character, apostolic character, that is wholly indifferent to how men perceive you and what they expect of you.

And that you can be obedient to God by not acting, even though it's going to bring a necessary reproach that cannot be explained. And until you are that kind of man, you're not yet God's man who can be sent. The question is, where do you become that? On the back side of the desert.

So while God waited for Moses an additional 40 years, Israel continued to be afflicted an additional 40 years, and God did not count that as being wasteful nor extravagant either. He allowed an entire nation to suffer, for yet another generation, waiting for the moment chosen of God for his own divine action. This is not only a revelation of the man, it's a revelation of the God who calls and sends the man.

And do we know that God in that way? And until we do, how then shall we be sent? How will we represent him and make him known if we do not know him as he is? An apostle is one sent in the place of another. He's representing God, not his thought about him, but how he in fact himself is. That's an expensive knowledge.

And so all of these things had to be waited upon for God. And think of the massive suffering of what was involved during that whole time of waiting. And God did not think it extravagant to allow it.

What would we think? Because we are expedient and utilitarian, and want to get it done now. Because our way is not his way, nor are our thoughts his thoughts. We are operating more out of the temper of modern things than of the timeless and the eternal God, who has a far different view about suffering than we.

That God will not send someone who is half-baked in the understanding of himself. Because what is he going to convey? What is an apostle? What does an apostle bring when he comes? Why is the apostle the foundation of the Church? Because he's clever, and knows the Scriptures, and knows Church government, and how to set up, or how to deal with issues of sin, or however those things may be true. What would you say is the distinctive, single, and greatest character, or characteristic, or trait of an apostle that makes him foundational to the Church? The foundation of the Church, without which there is no Church that is Church, is the knowledge of God as he is, in fact, in himself, and not as we think him to be.

How many have such a knowledge? And you can understand that that knowledge is not cheap, does not come easily, and takes a lifetime or years to obtain at the hand of God, through trial, through suffering, through failures that are permitted, through humiliations and defeats. Don't you think that Moses himself reflected on the fact that it's 40 years later, and Israel is still in bondage, suffering that much longer. And where is the God that allows that? And how is he just? And where is his righteousness? And why doesn't he alleviate the ills of his people? And isn't he their covenant keeping God? Anyone who has not wrestled with these questions cannot know God.

If you have subscribed to some glib, little, well, you know, that's God, and not wrestled with the theodicy of God, the righteousness of God, and the judgments of God, and why he allows suffering, and how do we reconcile? I'm not saying you would have come to an answer, but something in your kishkins, something in your gut that burrows in and wants to understand the enigma of God, and is not satisfied with mere simple, creedal statements. And God loves men like that who will wrestle with him. Isn't that Jacob with the lurd at the stream Jabbok? And many of us are not being sent because we've not wrestled, because we're satisfied with a patsy notion of God that may be technically correct, but it's not true.

We do not know him as we ought, and until we do, if we were sent, what would we perform? Why didn't they recognize his apparent calling? Who are you? Do you think that you're going to, you know, are you going to make these things right? They completely nullified any pretension that he might have had to being their deliverer. How come they didn't recognize it? Will God give something in advance, and then bring a fulfillment later? So our mistake is to think that because the calling, that it requires an immediate fulfillment. And in that I want to say that the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet.

That you may know something, and be called for something, or have a revelation of something, but it's not yet the moment of God's time to express it. And can you patiently hold it until that time? It's one of the tests that somehow God is pleased to perform. From the American and modern mentality, you would think, well, why not just give the calling when it's time to perform it? Why give it in advance, and then call for it at a much later time? Why put the man through all kinds of inward struggles, and wrestlings, and didn't God call me, and how come I failed? Why don't you just expedite it, and give the calling and the fulfillment right at the same time? What serves by giving a calling well in advance, and then requiring it at a much later time? What serves in a prophet holding something that he's not yet free to release, though God has given it to him? What happens to a man when he has to hold something for a length of time, and even without an indication of when that will be alleviated? Can you see something like a tea bag seeping in a pot? Seeping, and seeping, and how long, and how long do I hold this? It's in my bones, it's waiting for expression.

When comes the fulfillment? Why does God allow that? That's what I'm getting at. What takes place existentially and inwardly that somehow serves the purposes of God? And I don't think that patience is one of the more celebrated virtues of modern life. Impatience is much more characteristic.

How about the fact that Moses is 40 years on the other side of the desert? Is that just a coincidence? Why 40? What's the significance of that number? It's the time of trial and testing. We need to respect the extraordinary preparation of a man for service. Because if we don't respect it in Moses, will we respect it in ourselves? And will we be willing to submit to waiting and to conditions of trial and preparation for true service? When all the world and the religious world clamors for action.

I mean, the doors are open, the communist regime has collapsed, people have been for 70 years in atheism, wide open territory, let's go! And going we have. Paul was with me with Gene, the guy who wrote the early church, Gene Edwards, and that man was beside himself. He had just come back from Romania and he was fluttering and fluttering.

In fact, he's now written a book. And the thing that incensed him was that there was a clear slate. He was an atheistic nation that knew nothing about God.

And now the doors were opened and to his horror, what was happening is that the American model of conventional church was being replicated in that land. From scratch they could have moved directly into apostolic verity. Instead, they moved into conventional evangelical things with an elevated platform of minister, passive congregation, and all the kinds of things that have constituted death spiritually in America, now transported to that land because the people were wide open to receive anything that came to them.

So there's much to be said for waiting and everything to be said for sending. Let's look at that in chapter 3. Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the backside of the desert and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

What do you think that the first angelic pronouncement from heaven, that this day is born unto you a Savior, even Christ the Lord, came to those who tended the flock? Am I asking an asinine question to a bunch of moderns who have never had anything to do with sheep at all? Is there something in God's heart that is tender to those who watch the flock by night, who are dutiful, faithful, unprepossessing? You know that shepherding sheep was the most disgraceful vocation in Egypt. There was nothing lower in Egyptian value than tending flocks. And for 40 years, that's what Moses did.

He tended the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law. Was that because there was nothing better to do, or was that the best that he could have done? What does serve in monotony, in regularity, in something that is predictable, that has no variation, that lacks any kind of flamboyance or charismatic excitement, but requires a steadfast, patient, faithful performance of something small and unprepossessing day after day after day after day? And if Moses had not done that, would he have been qualified to bring the flock of God, which is Israel, out of Egypt? Was the one a necessary preliminary to the other? And if so, are we willing to serve our apprenticeship in the things that are ordinary, unseen, unglorious, undistinguished, and show ourselves faithful in that in order to be faithful in the other? So I don't think that this is just historical happenstance. I think that this is the sublime wisdom and requirement of God.

It comes out of circumstance. It comes out of flight. It comes out of Moses fleeing from Egypt and finding himself in Midian and into an economy that has at its heart the tending of sheep.

But it was God's exquisite and perfect and necessary preparation for a man who was a prince in Egypt. And I can't say that I have ever known this vocation, but I'll never forget my one experience when I lived in Israel as an immigrant and wanted to seek the Lord. And in Carmel, in the mountains there in Galilee,

where they put up this experimental community, I went up into the highest reaches watching the sun come up to commune with God.

A great fiery red orb of the sun came up. Meanwhile, to get up there, my flesh was so pricked and cut and bleeding from the brambles and thorns and thickets that I didn't realize were there. That topography is cursed.

There's no more rugged severe topology than what is Israel. I mean, it was rugged just to navigate my way up. Then I finally sat on a rock, and I'm waiting to commune with God in that wonderful quiet, the sun is coming up, and with it almost instantly the heat of a furnace.

And with it, the budging of flies, for I found that I was sitting in a place that shepherds had occupied, and it was laden with sheep dropping everywhere. And so I had a little taste. My romantic notion of communing with God dissipated.

I was unable to be, I was distracted by the budging of flies and swanning. I was wearing shorts. I came home with lumps like that on my legs.

But it was because of what attends sheep. How do you like 40 years of that? So I have a great admiration for men who are in undistinguished, unsung places, but who watch the flock by night. Faithful in the homely and inconspicuous service of God.

And somehow feel that there's a necessity for that before the things that are glorious. And that this is not something that we should pass over as just being incidental or coincidental, but something in the prescribed wisdom of God for the man being prepared for sending. How about the backside of the desert? He led the flock to the backside of the desert, where the mount of God is to be found, and only there.

So you can go to all your charismatic conferences, and all of the renowned speakers for your great experience in God, and come back with ashes in your mouth, because you've not gone to the backside, you've gone to the front side, and the mount of God is not located there. Anybody know what Horeb means? It means dry, desiccated, barren, and impoverished. That's the mount of God.

That's what God occupies. That's where he's to be found. How many people have a stomach to seek him in that place? Or to be found there.

I don't know why he led the sheep to the backside, because what does backside imply? I mean, come on. It speaks for itself. I want to describe some town in America as the anus of America.

The backside is unsavory. You guys help me. Give me some adjectives.

Unbecoming. Barren. Nothing spectacular.

The front side is where the action is. It's the front side that's lush. It's the front side that has all the glitter, and the big stars, and the names, and the activity, and this is where the action is.

Who's going to seek the backside? Where the mount of God is. It was then, and it is now. I can't tell you how much reproach and stink I had to bear in coming to this place.

Living in Plainfield, New Jersey, 20 miles away from two and a half million Jews, and coming to this nothing place out of a still small voice that seemed totally illogical. To leave such a harvest field and to

come to a place where we were the only Jews, and nothing in this barren location. What would be the equivalent for yourself? Do you have a stomach for it? Can you be weaned away from the front side? With all of the four-color brochures that come in your mailbox.

I've got boxes of Christian mailing, I tell you. It'll warm us in the winter. With invitations and appeals and the conference of the year and the man of God and the now word of the prophet.

There's no end. And the few of them that I've attended, I've come away with the taste of ashes in my mouth. Highly inflated, what's the word, hyped up, but not the revelation of the God of Moses.

Here's a statement about the man who led his flock to that place, didn't avoid it, didn't circumvent it, didn't look for a lush place. I don't know what was in his heart, that he navigated that way. And whoever a pastor is among us today or who will be, will you leave your flock on the back side? And you'll not be speaking to them what is in vogue, what is the present charismatic fad.

You'll not be speaking about church growth and power evangelism and getting on the bandwagon of the things that the body of Christ is now excited about. But the Lord will lead you in another way. You'll be talking about the cross and death to self and self-denial.

I don't know what, you'll be in the barren place. Can you leave your flock there? All of this is preliminary qualification for the encounter with God and its ending. So he led the flock to the back side of the desert and came to the mountain of God even to Horeb.

One of the rare uses of that name, which in Hebrew means dry and destitute, barren and unprepossessing. The word Sinai invokes another image. A mountain wreathed with flame, mighty with the sense of God's presence.

But Horeb is some little mean, lowly kind of a nothing which is not only where God is found but what God himself is. Why is he found there? For the very same reason that he's born in stables and has the inception of his kingdom with a man who dribbles in his beard and is joined by the indebted and the disappointed in a cave. This is God.

And if you don't know that, how shall you be sent? What are you going to communicate? And it's only this knowledge of God that brings men out of bondage. For after all, what is Egypt? It's the antithesis. Egypt is lush.

Egypt is carnality. Egypt is fresh gratification. God is Horeb.

Dryness. Arid. Seeming disappointment.

Nothing that tantalizes the flesh. The God of humility. And it's only the revelation of that God that can save men out of Egypt.

That somehow the seemingly inferior thing is alone calculated to destroy the thing that seems to have all the marbles. That the weakness of God is greater than the strength of men and the foolishness of God is greater than the wisdom of men. Egypt was wisdom.

It was civilization in the uttermost. Horeb is something entirely antithetical opposite. Better question yet anybody who is willing to know the backside of the desert.

We're not going to leap into the burning bush until we first come to the other place. Didn't that indicate that like Moses he knew from an earlier time his calling and yet there was no release or fulfillment throughout his entire maturity until his 30th year. Now don't you think he was qualified when he was 21? Wasn't he at the height of his validity and manhood and full of sap and ready and able to do for God and fulfill the Father's will? But that was not the time of the call.

How about Elijah? You don't hear a cotton-picking whisper about the man until suddenly he's introduced in 1 Kings 16 or 17 in confrontation with Ahab. So evidently there's a pattern here. The man that God uses.

Now there's use and use. I'm talking about ultimate use, ultimate deliverance, ultimate confrontation. You're not going to be dealing with a few Egyptians.

You're confronting the Pharaoh. You're not ameliorating Israel's present affliction. You're delivering them out of bondage.

You're not only out, but you're bringing them into a land that flows with milk and honey. So what would you say in the light of this very hour and the time that remains before the conclusion of the age and the magnitude of the tasks that yet await? I would say in the light of these things, these are ultimate things, God is looking for and shaping men in an ultimate way. The great works of God in the last days will come out of the rest of God, but they will not come.

Yeah, God knows it. He hears the cry and he sees the need. And we have to have a sublime confidence not only in His compassion and mercy, but in His sovereignty and will.

I think that that will save us from premature being saviors of the world. There's a statement that I've caught up, Shelley and you've probably heard it from me many times, but you need to hear it. Anything that happens anywhere affects everything everywhere.

And I didn't get, I got that from Time magazine. Some article I was reading on a plane about economics today, where the writer said, anything that happens anywhere affects everything everywhere. I said, my God, if that's true of economics, how much true, how much more true in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God? So put that into your spirit.

Anything that happens anywhere affects everything everywhere. And that'll save you from self-initiated activity that you think is good. That is not coordinate with things appointed by God in time.

The angel of the Lord 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. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight why the bush is not burned.

And when the Lord 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. As good students of the Word, what questions would you put to this text? What distinguishes this bush from others that may have been ignited by spontaneous combustion? What are the questions? Why didn't God reveal himself without a bush? Just an apparition, just like he did to Joshua. Art thou for us or against us? Neither. I'm the Lord, I'm the captain of the boats.

Take off your shoes. Why did he do that for Moses? Why does Moses require burning bush? I'm not so much asking for the answers now, I'm asking for the questions. We've got to learn how to probe a text, and this is loaded.

This is loaded. So why does God reveal himself in this context? What has that got to do with the particular and peculiar sending of Moses? How does that relate to the history of Moses, of a man who looked this way and that and buried the Egyptian but never thought to look up? What is God wanting to impress by this kind of revelation of himself, and is it a revelation of himself? What is there in a burning bush that reveals God that is not consumed? And what was the key in this episode when Moses turned aside to see? Was that his own voluntary act? Was it inevitable? Curiosity itself would require one looking into it? With what kind of looking did he look? And is it more than our ordinary looking? Is there a looking and a looking? Is there a faith and a faith? Is there an obedience and an obedience? When a man says, Here am I, is that just an ordinary, here I am? Or is that something in which all the stops are pulled out? And no matter what you have for me, no matter what you require of me, no matter what the consequence of me, here am I. What evoked this uttermost consecration to God that we do not see in multitudes of God's charismatic people? How many of them have said that with the same intensity and meaning as Moses said it? And therefore are yet knocking about in wilderness places and are not yet sent. Until God has the whole man lock, stock, barrel.

Say, Here am I. There's no sending. So how was that response of Moses related to the confrontation of God in the midst of the burning bush? And why a bush? A bush is the most ordinary, scrubby thing that can be found. And I don't know that there's any single authoritative answer.

Some commentators have likened the burning bush to the plight of Israel, a people that have suffered historically affliction that have not been obliterated. They yet remain. And God was saying something to Moses about the call to the nation that He's still the God of this nation in the midst of them.

Though they're burning in the affliction of their judgments, yet they do not expire. And I'm sure that part, but there may be more.

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