

K-543 Defining Apostolic Sending (2 of 2)

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's presence in the ordinary and the necessity of examining our past to fulfill our apostolic calling.

Duration: 23:05

Scripture: Genesis 12:1, Exodus 3:4, Matthew 16:24, Matthew 22:14, Luke 9:62, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, Hebrews 3:15

Topics: "Apostolic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being able to summarize theological concepts in a concise and impactful way. They discuss the significance of God calling a person twice, suggesting that it is a cause for fear and reflection. The speaker also highlights the value of understanding the eternal context of God's dealings and the need for the Church to regain this awareness. They urge listeners to not overlook the everyday aspects of life, as it is in these gritty and challenging moments that God can be found.

Transcript

What we need to understand much more largely is the preparation of character for eternity. Not only in this age, but in the ages to come. Moses had respect to the recompense of the reward.

It's not a statement about the efficacy that would be obtained in this life only, but the eternal outworking of the investment of God in the shaping of his character in this life. We're going to come back to this, and I'm not happy with the way I'm saying it now, but just lest you think that everything is in terms of Moses' call, God's purpose, the deliverance of Israel, however great those things are, there's something beyond that. That if we don't understand that we ourselves will not be willing to submit patiently to the preparation of character and life, if we see it only in terms of this life, we need to see it in terms of the eternal context.

Our call is an eternal call, and our earthly service is only one aspect of that fulfillment. Hallelujah. And we will be discussing this somewhere along the line, or we will have grievously missed God.

But just for now, just to insert the note of eternity into your present consideration. Thank you, Lord. Or else it will not make sense.

Even the enormous value and purpose of God in bringing Israel out of bondage, and all that derives from Israel in promulgating the Messianic line and salvation for mankind, does not fully explain or exhaust how

the painstaking dealings and shapings of God and the character of the man God sees in the eternal context, and we need to see it also. That's why 40 years and 80 years is nothing. It's a blip.

It's nothing to be 40 years in the backside of the desert, if it's a preparation not only for this age, but also the ages to come. And this seeing, this awareness has been virtually totally lost by the church of our generation, at a very great detriment to the faith. It needs to be restored, and we will be spending time on this subject of eternity.

But I'm just saying that much now. Well, have you had time to ponder the burning bush? Need more time. Let's take the bush itself.

Wouldn't you think that if God is to be found in the midst of something, it would be more grand than merely an ordinary bush? Shouldn't he be in the midst of a burning oak, or some great towering massive tree that bespeaks the grandeur of God? But a bush? What is there about a bush that God dwells in, that is the key to revealing apostolic character? That when one will turn aside to see that, the God in that bush, he God calls. What's the bush? It's prickly, it's ordinary. How much has that got to do with the genius of what is apostolic? I'll tell you one of the greatest statements that was ever said to me as a young believer that probably saved me from much was, Artie said, Don't you know that what the gospel is about is to teach men how to live? I thought it was for Bible studies.

That the idea that the scripture is to teach men how to live. Here's what I'm trying to feel for. That we have not found God where he is most profoundly to be discovered.

Because we have not thought to find him in the ordinary thing. That there's a revelation of God that must be made and given in that place where we can't be sent. That what an apostle is, is a man who sees the grandeur of God in the ordinary place and the ordinary circumstance.

And that this is what our life is, and the life of our people and our congregations. And this is what we superficially gloss over, looking for the grand eloquent and the impressive, but it's the grit, it's the daily life, it's the failures, it's the frustrations, it's the vexations, it's wiping the noses of our kids, it's working our way through the trials of our life, that where God is. And if we've not found him there or thought to find him there, we've not found him.

That's what I'm getting at. That's what I sense in my spirit. That he turned aside to see that.

Because many will pass that by. And that's why we have a whole history of broken marriages, divorces endemic in the church as it is in the world. We pass it by, we throw it on the scrap heap, it's a failed thing.

We don't turn aside to see. We have not burrowed into it, we've not examined, we've not gotten into the entrails and into the kishkas. We're not willing to invest ourselves into the gritty, sticky, pointed thing, which is the constituent element of all our life.

We're looking for something large and magnificent and heroic and dramatic, and God is waiting to be found there. I wish that somebody had the ability to sum this up in a really terse way, make a single statement of this critical. Here's a church that is languishing in its superficiality, looking for something outside of it to illumine its days and to redeem them.

When its days, its ordinary days, the things that make up its life, is the very grit of God, it's the very ingredient of God, it's the place where he abides and dwells, that if we would look into it, if we would give

ourselves to it, we would find such unspeakable realms of meaning and significance, and very God himself in a depth that we've never discovered him. How can we be apostolic if we have not even examined the content of our own life, and have passed and glossed over that, looking for end-time truth and other highfalutin categories, and have neglected the grit of which we ourselves are made, to understand it and to turn back and to look into it? Now, I don't know if we're going to go to this subject from this, but this is close to the message I brought to Germany on my last trip. I said, until the Church of Germany will turn and turn aside to see and look into the burning bush of the Holocaust, and all of the things that made the Holocaust inevitable, namely the historic failure of the Church in Germany, both in its orthodoxy and its piety or its liberalism, there'll be no future.

You'll not be an apostolic presence in your own nation to deliver your own nation, let alone be to Israel, what I believe God intends that you should, except you first turn aside to see and look into your own historic past, and let it not be glossed over. There's no future. Your future is proportionate to your past.

There's no significant present, except that you understand the present in the light of the past and the anticipation of the future. This turning aside or turning back to look into what we would otherwise have dismissed as having been finished is a key to the whole future use. Because in God's sight, that which is past is now, and God requires that which is past.

Ecclesiastes 3.15. And that's the very thing that, humanly speaking, we want to pass over. It's painful. It would be painful for the German church to look into its past.

It doesn't want to remember. You don't want to remember things that have to do with failure. Your divorces, your unhappy marriages, your failed families, your lost congregations.

Who doesn't have something like that? And yet, when Moses turned aside to see, God called to him. Because he didn't turn aside to see out of mere curiosity. He turned aside to see to ask why this bush burns but is not consumed.

That's apostolic turning. That's apostolic examination. That's apostolic seeing.

It's not human curiosity to understand an aberration of nature. It's a man turning aside to get into something. Why? And how many of us here feel that that why has been both asked and answered with regard to the Holocaust? With regard to America's past, or any nation's past, or our own personal past? And until we turn aside, can we be sent into the present? That's what God was waiting for.

When he saw that Moses turned aside to see, he called Moses, Moses. This is this remarkable play of the things that are sovereign with God and the things that pertain to the freedom of man. I don't know that Moses was ever more free than in that moment.

And I know for myself, the moment of my freedom came on May 26, 1964, when I called on the name of the Lord. I know that I could not have called except by the grace of God. But that I freely called was somehow a choice that I was making of a true kind and of a first kind.

It was a true choosing, a free choosing. And I think it's something like that here. So there's that remarkable paradox of the faith, the things that God establishes in accordance with his will.

God has birthed the man. He saved him out of a generation when Pharaoh was killing the sons of Israel and saved him up out of a contrivance made from pitch and tar. He appointed him to be the deliverer of

Israel and yet in a critical moment something was required that could only be freely given, that God waited to see.

Same thing with Abraham when he sacrificed Isaac. Now by this I know that you fear God. Did he have to wait to see the demonstration? Evidently.

That he knew that it would be made has to do with God's provident ability. But as far as Abraham was concerned and Moses is concerned and we are concerned something freely must be given that is antithetical to all flesh turning aside to see. You know what we want to do? We want to go on.

We don't want to go back to why the last marriage failed. We want to go on. Try, try again.

And that's why we're in the shabby condition that we're in. And that's why the next marriage is equally likely to fail. We've not burrowed in to the nexus and the root of our failure.

Of what God is wanting us to see and to understand out of the ordinary elements of our life and of our history. And that this is somehow a key to the apostolic man whom God will send. How do you feel about that? Have you done it? Will you be willing? Is a God still waiting in that bush? It burns because he's present.

And until we find him there we're not going to hear ourselves called or sent. It requires a kind of spiritual courage. What would it take for the Church of Germany or the nation to examine its own past and its own failures? Haven't they paid reparations? Aren't they absolved of their responsibility? Haven't they given Israel millions and millions of Deutschmarks? Yes, they may have required the requirements of men but have they met the requirement of God? It's remarkable that the Church has lost its sense of the past in exact proportion to its sense of the future.

And therefore its present is completely undistinguished. You know, if we could see by the eye of God as he looks down on the modern Church with its amens and hallelujahs, its choruses, its homilies, its biblical messages all as an overlay to a people who inside are struggling, failing, stumbling, working, you know, and backing up. Doing the best we can.

Can you see that? It's like a superficial haze. It's a religious gloss. The real life, the real religion, the real spiritual thing is God's people in their condition, in the reality of their life, in their situation.

And that's what's up with. My early believing life I just saw my first pastor on this last cross-country trip and we reminisced together and he admitted that it was not a thing understood that a message given from the pulpit should address the actual operating working life of the people. It was only to be a biblical message.

I was never questioned. I was never examined. I was never held accountable.

I was never dealt with over my relationship with my wife or my children or how I'm living my life in a daily way. That was my business. Religion had to do with sermonizing and conducting services.

How you lived until Sunday was your business and was private. Completely the opposite if what we're sensing about what this means apostolically and haven't we for that reason condemned the church to not being apostolic. It never will be it until it turns back and sees and deals with the grit of its life the ordinary thing.

And merely to adopt a new vocabulary of apostolicity is to compound the error. My God, okay, play with charismatic terms if you want something novel but don't use the holy vocabulary of the faith and call that religious thing apostolic because you're employing the vocabulary. It won't be apostolic until we have turned aside to see.

So that's what I sense. I'm not saying thus saith the Lord but God in that bush in the midst of that bush not at the periphery at the midst of it, the heart of it we've got enough raw material we've got enough treasure in God's people in the ordinary constitution of their life their circumstance and their history that if we would not examine it and deal with it it would be a key to apostolic glories. And I have to add what the rabbis say about this text which I really give rabbis that much credence but they say that what was so significant in God's sight was that in turning aside to see, Moses took the risk of not ever being able to turn back again.

When you wrench when you turn aside to see this, you can say bye-bye baby to your categories. There you are all nicely set up with your charismatic understanding and New Testament convictions but to turn aside to see means that something fundamental has turned something has been wrenched and there's no necessary coming back. And you need to be willing to risk that.

All of your security religious and spiritual all of the things that you understood about the faith or yourself in the faith might well be lost. It's so wrenching an experience who knows what the end of it will be but unless you're willing to risk it and venture it, there's no calling and no sending. That's one rabbinical comment that I appreciate and sense has a great measure of truth to it.

You know what I'm getting at? That we don't know as we ought to know. Or God's complaint to Israel, you thought I was such a one as yourself. You know what I want to say guys? heads and shoulders over most as we are, we are still profoundly falling short of the glory of God.

We do not know him as we ought. And even our sense of the faith therefore is flawed. So there's something, there's a profound something from God that has to do with being apostolic that is not yet met.

It's a radical openness to God for whatever he will reveal, even about ourselves in that time. That takes something. And where did God give me this? For many of you who have never heard me share this, on an airplane.

Flying into Minneapolis every seat taken and what is rare for me, my Bible on my lap. Because when I'm on the airplane I read Sports Illustrated, Newsweek every time I catch up. But I was in Exodus 3 reading this text and brooding over it that Moses turned aside to sin.

I'm looking up and I'm rubbing my chin and the corner of my eye catches the passenger in the next seat, a woman clearly Jewish. There wasn't a star of David on her to be found, no question. She was Jewish and I turned to her and I said when's the last time that you've seen a Jewish man in a public place with a Bible in his lap? She went, she choked and spluttered and she turned away from me and began a conversation with the Gentile woman on the other side.

And I didn't say anything and a half hour later, the announcement okay, put on your, straighten your seats, put on your seatbelt, you're preparing to land. I closed my Bible, I turned to her one more time, I said you know that if you don't love truth how then are you Jewish? She went boom! Right like a knife right in the kishkas. I said when do you think you'll again have another occasion to meet a man like me who is one of unnumbered thousands who has come to the knowledge of the God of our fathers through the Messiah

Jesus.

And having said that she turned away and spoke again to the neighbor on her right side. She refused to turn aside to see. I was for her the burning bush.

And had she asked that one question, like how does a nice man like you how are you able to believe that? That's all she had to say and she would have been finished. Dead and done. And she knew it.

She knew it. She was not willing to open herself to a vulnerability to a change of categories by which she could never turn back to where she was before. She had her life all nicely ordered.

She was buying Israel bonds and attended a Jewish community center and was philanthropic and doing all kinds of nice things. She never hurt anybody. So why should she take a risk of opening to another category that would threaten everything that's established, that's known, that's familiar, that's secure, that's comfortable.

Now the question is, she's an unsaved Jew, but to what degree are we not turning aside but turning from for the same reason. Unwilling to threaten our categories our measure of faith our present understanding our security even presently even spiritually God is looking for something whatever that something is, it's at the heart of what apostolic is and when he finds it he says willingness to risk dislocation to ask why, to see even if what is revealed imperils all that we have presently understood all our hope our security upon which our future is predicated. God waits to see if we'll risk that by turning aside.

Not to ask how, but to ask why. Don't miss that. We Americans would probably have asked, how? How come? But why is a different kind of question.

How is methodological and that's us how do you do it? First you do this, then you do this but why is another kind of asking. Okay, God sees and then God calls what do you make of the fact that he had to repeat himself? Moses Moses, what is Moses' heart of hearing? Is not a syllable in this text or any other not given of God charged, replete with meaning. Why the repetition of the name? But if he said it once, isn't that enough? Men who are called twice are called to something uttermost.

They're called to something ultimate. They're called to something of great weight and great consequence that will require their all. Probably their death.

Unquestionably their humiliation. Their suffering. If God calls you once you can breathe easily.

If he calls you twice you're right, you can fear. So who now has the perspicacity to sum up what we're saying in a statement? The ability to sum something up tersely, in a few words and make the point is a theological skill that we need to consciously develop. We're making, we're feeling for something we're getting a handle on it now to express it is to make it your own.

And to be changed by it. Why does God call a man twice? What have we concluded? It's a statement of urgency, of ultimate call of a forewarning there's a somberness you know, this is going to cost you but at the same time it's bathed in the compassion of God. And the scripture doesn't say how it was sounded, there's no musical notation.

can God speak sternly and compassionately in the same voice? Remarkable that God should call a man by name which is exactly how I was saved in Jerusalem almost 30 years ago. But it's one thing to be

called to be saved and another thing to be called to be sent. God only called my name once to be saved but the real issue for us today and the issue of our apostolic hearing is to hear ourselves being called through the text itself.

Who here today in listening and participating in this discussion is hearing the voice of God saying to you Jack Jack, Mary Mary, Lillian Lillian, Terry Terry Can a can a text be transfused not to be an object only of contemplation but to become for us the very same call. Are you willing that it should? It's a terrifying call to be sent to face Pharaoh. This is big league stuff.

Ultimate confrontation a stiff necked and rebellious people who will vex the very soul out of you. You'll be stretched to breaking you'll cry out God why did you ever call me and block me out from your book and every kind of wretchedness that Moses had to experience the golden calf episode, the murmuring in the wilderness, the betrayals from his own sister must have been intuited when God said Moses, Moses you couldn't know the details of it but you know this is going to cost me everything and what follows here am I. I wonder if I could say for everyone in this room this morning that we have made our here am I to God. As absolute and as total as was God's call so equally was Moses' answer and isn't this also at the heart of what is apostolic? No strings attached, no holds barred, no conditions no questions even, here am I. Whatever this costs, whatever it will imply, whatever the consequence, whatever the suffering, here am I. Whatever the anguish of soul here am I. We talk about the commitment I almost want to spit that word out it's a cheapie and we're continually remaking it but have we ever made this once and for all? Here am I. Sorry to get preachy and that's the holy ground.

It's not the geographical location it could even happen in La Porte, Minnesota right in this room and even today, the same holy ground to which Moses took off his shoes then is ours now. What makes it holy is the presence of God the call of God and the total response of the man. That's the holy ground.

Having said here am I Moses in verse 11 says who am I? Notice here am I is followed by who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh. And you know what? God doesn't argue with him. He doesn't quibble.

He completely agrees with Moses. Doesn't answer his question in that sense as if you know to reassure him that he's qualified. There's not much left after 40 years in the wilderness that one can bank on.

It's the not the shell of the man and what the quintessence of the man that is being given to God. Anything in which he had had any previous confidence or ability that might have accounted for success is gone. Just what he is in the man himself, the thing in itself has been given to God.

So who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And the Lord just overlooks the question because it doesn't require his response. 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 that you shall serve God upon this mountain. Does Moses need that word? I would.

I would need to know it. Because are you always going to be conscious in a felt way that God is with you? Forget it. What you're going to be conscious of is my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? That's what you'll be conscious of.

But nevertheless what did God say? Certainly I will be with you. Peace be unto you. This creative proclamation that establishes the fact.

I'm sure Moses had many occasions to cry out my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And we will also. So I still don't understand about serving God upon this mountain. This shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee.

What's the token? Does it say sign in your... Yeah. That's better than token. I take it as... Yeah, that's a key right there.

If I will be with you what would that impart to the man to whom that has been spoken that would be a sign? This is his apostolic authority. And this is how we distinguish between false apostles and true. Many of whom are presently circulating and will increase to the end of the age.

Real whizzes and sharp and able to paraphrase Paul and have a certain facility to work problems in the church and maybe even to establish them. But what do they lack? That is the distinguishing mark. The authority of God which is God.

The presence of God which is His authority that no man can take for himself but is given with the call of an apostolic kind. There's not a hold out anywhere. Every single soul that makes up that body has said, here am I. They're living for God.

They have no other purpose for their being. An entire people sold out. The presence of God is with them.

They exude and exhibit an apostolic authority. Something issues from their life that touches the community in which they're placed and the world. There are those that are sent out from them that move in that authority.

This, I'm getting a Holy Ghost This is what the church was at the first and needs again to be. So maybe we have to pray for that as a conclusion for this morning. The restoration of this apostolic quality and character given by God and yet waiting for something from men.

Here am I. The holy ground. Not just the individuals but the whole composition of the body. Apostolic body.

And I'll tell you that Pharaoh will tremble over that. He's not at all perturbed by a well-meaning character who will slay a single Egyptian. But let someone face him in the authority given by God.

It's another matter. Hallelujah.

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