

Turning Aside to See

by Art Katz

The sermon challenges believers to turn aside and recognize God's presence in the ordinary, leading to a deeper understanding of their purpose and calling.

Duration: 36:14

Scripture: Acts 13:2

Topics: "Gods Presence", "Spiritual Calling"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of turning aside to see God's presence in the ordinary aspects of life, urging believers to seek deeper meaning and purpose. It delves into the story of Moses being called by God from a burning bush, highlighting the significance of being sent by God rather than acting out of personal ambition or compassion. The message challenges listeners to not overlook the opportunities where God is waiting to be discovered and to engage in a life of significance and ultimate calling.

Transcript

All the way from America, from Minnesota. You're welcome this morning, huh? You'd like to come, we're going together. So, good morning, you dear folk.

Am I getting tender as I'm getting older, or are you just looking better? I'm impressed with the saints of New Zealand, and with the nation. So, I'm a privileged man, and, Lord, how do I rate that you have allowed me this privilege to stand before this people and to bring you word? Stunning, an astonishment. So, let them hear your voice, Lord.

Not just your words, the voice of your speaking, and become so attuned to it. And love, my God, your accent, the information, the spirit of your speaking, and spoil us. And we thank you.

Save us from near successions of Sundays. May we be waiting to come in, Lord, breaking into the house of God, knocking the door down in our eagerness and anticipation to be met by the living God, and to receive the word appointed. You guys realize what this is about? Ooh! God forbid it should ever be reduced to predictable religion.

So, my God, shake who needs to be shaken, wake who is sleeping, and then altogether, Lord, come and give us the event that your word is. We thank and give you praise for the privilege of a God, a living God, who speaks, and speaks of effect, speaks with purpose, has ends to serve, and has called us to them in

Yeshua's holy name. Amen.

Well, I started last night with Moses, and I can't get away from him. So I think this is a two-part series. If you missed it last night, everything is recorded.

It was Moses being called up to the mount of God, come up unto me and be there. So the two critical words for this congregation, and through you, the church at New Zealand, is to be and to see. This morning, Moses turned aside to see a burning bush.

I'm just struck with remarkable parallels. I'm turning it over on my tongue, enjoying it. I want to edify myself in what I'll hear out of my own mouth this morning.

I've never seen these parallels quite this way. The mountain reads with fire, come up and be there, and the burning bush, to see. The same God, the same fire, one in a remarkable, terrifying, give me a word, terrifying display.

Too modest. A sensational exhibition of God. And then Moses' whole inception and call into the remarkable thing to which he's called, nothing less than to deliver his nation, to confront Pharaoh, the ultimate enemy of God.

Moses feeling himself terribly inadequate. He's a failed man because he took a shot at it once before, 40 years before, to rectify the visible wrong. After all, he saw his kinsmen being pummeled by those Egyptians and he interceded by killing an Egyptian.

It says he looked this way and that way and he didn't see any human thing to interfere and he went and he slew the Egyptian and buried him in his den. Then his crime was detected and he had to flee, and 40 years in the wilderness. Only the Lord knows what those 40 years contained.

You know what, are you astonished at the brevity of Scripture? It's so absolutely terse, T-E-R-S-E. I never fail to stagger at how much God can say in so few words, so unlike us. We're so loquacious.

We tumble out at the mouth with such volume with such sparse content, and God is exactly the reverse. So few words and such content. Just listen to this, Exodus chapter 3. Now Moses kept the flock.

Hey, let's just stay right there. Moses kept the flock. You know, what is it with me this morning? I'm just in one of those remarkably tender moods, appreciating your pastor, appreciating all pastors.

So often my adversaries, men who are suspicious of this prophetic personality, should we even allow him in? And I'm just feeling so remarkably benevolent and kindly disposed toward pastors, churches, institutions. You better pray for me. I think I'm losing my sharp edge.

But here's the point. I have a profound respect for those who keep the flock. Hotshots like me come and go.

We're a flash and we're somewhere else tomorrow. But the man who is there every day, the patient week after week attention to the flock, commands my respect and my esteem. And the first verse of Moses begins with that.

Moses kept the flock. And when the angels had to announce the advent of the birth of Christ in the city of Bethlehem, the message did not come to the high priest or to the religious establishment. It came to the

shepherds who kept the flock by night.

So there's something about keeping the flock that is dear to God's heart. Just this regular, patient attention is more commendable than the exciting and occasional prophetic proclamation, which is altogether important, but that steady keeping of the flock. And I'm just so grateful for men like that, not being a pastor myself.

So he kept the flock of Jephthah, 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 this bush is not burnt. 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. 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, 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 come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land and unto a good land, unto a lodge, unto a land flowing with milk and honey, unto the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hittites, the Jebusites. And now therefore behold, the cry of the children of Israel has 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. So I sat down now and did nothing but read that glorious text that is sufficient for the service.

But to do this any justice, to give this any kind of commentary and examination, will require three days. Did you bring your lunch? We must not rush this. This is awesome.

Even the word sent you. I have sent thee. Because that's the apostolic distinctive.

That's what the word apostolos means, sent. God does not debate with Moses when Moses defers and says, Who am I that I should go? Oh, don't get carried away with this false modesty. You're a prince of Egypt and you are a man of astounding credentials, of a Levitical kind.

You have all that is required. And God does not in any way dispute with Moses. He agrees with him.

You're not qualified. Your qualification is a disqualification. You're not even being allowed to go on the basis of your commiseration with your own people.

Look what it got you 40 years ago. It only ended up with a better Egyptian than the requirement of your flight. When you're moved by your own identification or compassion or concern, it results in death.

I will send you. Their cry has come up to me. You're not to go because you have seized upon something that needs to be rectified and a need that needs to be met.

You're going because you're sent. It's remarkable when we leap from here right into the book of Acts and examine the first apostolic sending in Acts 13, it's identically the same. The voice of the Lord, the Spirit of God coming into the congregation at Antioch, separate unto me Paul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them.

The work is not even identified. Separate unto me men who are already separated, not from their ethnic and national prejudices, but even from their own religious ambition, that it does not matter where they're sent or even when they're sent. As a matter of fact, they would have been just as content to remain in the place of worship unto the Lord, which is what was taking place when Nicole came.

But to be sent is to turn the world upside down because God says, I will be with you. It took 40 years to empty Moses of the very credentials that would have impressed us and fought him qualified to be the one to be sent. But after those qualifications were negated by 40 years in the backside and out of circulation and a man comes to the consciousness that he has nothing and is nothing and can say with Paul, I'm the least of all saints, then God will send.

See why we're not sent? We're presumptuous. We're ambitious. And we even find many causes that are worthy of our attention.

But God says, the affliction of my people has come up before me. I have seen. I have heard.

Now I send you. You don't go because you have seen. You go because you are sent.

This will save you, dear saints, from last day's deception, from running hither and yon in the multitudinous needs that will be omnipresent, that will engage you, that you think you need to attend if you don't wait on God who sends. You see how instructive this is? This isn't just a little moment in historical time quaint for us to examine how the call of Moses came. It's replete with timeless wisdom in the way of God that changes not.

I will send you. So what was God waiting for? Something had to come from Moses that was critical, and I believe it's this. When he saw the burning bush, I will see why this bush burns but it's not consumed.

This great sight, verse 3, I will now turn aside and see this great sight and why the bush is not burned. You want to know what the true apostolic credential is? The disposition not to pass something over and to disregard it because it's only a bush. But not only to turn aside to see, but not for novelty's sake, but to ask why the bush burns but it's not consumed.

I'm astonished that my Jewish people, so sophisticated, so erudite in so many areas of learning and expertise and knowledge and business, but when it comes to the themes of eternity, they are so infantile. They're biblical ignoramuses, and I condemned, I point my finger in their chest and I said, I can't believe how little sincerity and concern and interest you have in truth for all of the way, painstaking way you'll invest yourself in career and business, culture, academic, academia. When it comes to the issues of God and eternity, you're dumb-dumb.

What is it with you? Why aren't you serious enough about life? Then the rest will follow. If only you're serious enough about life, the rest will follow. But if you're casual in the New Zealand, Australian mode, you'll miss it, and you'll miss it in the place where God waits to be found, not in the spectacular, but in the ordinary, in the bush, in the everyday.

That's where he waits to be discovered. He's burning. The reason that that bush is not consumed is because he doesn't need it for fuel.

He's a self-existent God, but he's abiding in the midst of the ordinary, and that's exactly where we're missing him. We've overlooked, we've not turned aside to see. We've not been occupied with the ingredients, the raw material in which God abides, and to find him there is to find him ultimately and deeply and profoundly.

To miss that is to have God as a slogan, is to use the name Jesus as a catchword, is to have a body of doctrine and a credo, but you don't have the substance, the vitality, the reality of God as God. If you haven't found him in the midst of the bush, if you've not turned aside to see, and every one of you have opportunity in those failed occasions, in those distasteful things, in those frightening things, like failed marriage, divorce, family breakup, children have gone astray or freaked out, difficulties in the fellowship and we've left it to go elsewhere where we don't have to face problems of that kind. Oh, I'm just scratching the surface.

There's not a soul in this room or in this nation who has not had an occasion in some circumstance of their life where they could have found God in such a revelation of himself that would have been for them a calling if they had but turned aside to see. No, we pass it on. It's uncomfortable.

This strange phenomenon. Better keep your nose clean. Do you use that expression in New Zealand? Don't take any risk because, listen, we've got this thing nicely planned and it's working well and we have a Sunday service and our business and everything is nicely arranged in a respectable and polite Christian way.

Let's not risk it by turning aside to see a strange phenomenon, let alone we should turn aside to see to ask why. So the Holocaust could take place and six million of my people can go up like a crisp with smoke in ovens, not in some backwater nation of a primitive kind, but the most illustrious civilization of all nations. Germany, the land of Goethe, Fichte, Hegel, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Wagner.

Who's the great ethicist, the moral imperative, Kant? Hey, how come you never once ask the question, how come? Why don't you ask why? Why do you let history take place as if it's some accumulation of accidents, strange aberrations that we can cluck our tongue for a moment and turn the page to the sports section or turn on the telly or go and have a cup of tea as if nothing has happened? No wonder we are of little impact in the nation. No wonder we're dismissed as a little Sunday addendum that the world will allow you to indulge because you constitute no threat, you're of no consequence, you're just a pleasant little entity. You're not a prophetic presence.

You're not an apostolic presence. You're not sent into the world. Why should you be sent? What can you convey? What can you bring? You have not the requisite condition of being for which God will call your name because you have not turned aside to see.

You've let the divorce take place and you've married again or whatever it is and you sweep it under the carpet. You have not even derived the wisdom of why the thing failed. So you carry the seeds of it with you into the new situation which hopefully you'll not have to experience if this time by accident and circumstance you're more temperamentally disposed to each other.

But you've lost a value. You've lost a significance. You've lost meaning.

Am I bawling you out? Well, I'm not just addressing you. I'm addressing the entire Church of New Zealand and more than that, New Zealand itself because you need to recognize, dear saints, the powers of darkness that prevail over your nation and will allow you the modicum of comfort and security that you enjoy will allow that to continue so long as you don't become troublesome and ask questions and look to see the root of the matter or why something is taking place or is not taking place and you're quite content that one day should be like another and one Sunday like another. You're not concerned for meaning.

You're not concerned for value. You don't ask why. When God saw a man turn aside to see, oh, it must have warmed his heart because that's rare.

Well, my book on the Holocaust is out there. What a devastating statement. What a theme, what a thesis that the Holocaust was not some aberration of history that would not have taken place if that madman Hitler had not been born but quite the contrary, that the madman Hitler was quite in keeping with the sovereign purpose of God in order to fulfill judgments spoken in our Hebrew Scriptures that would befall us in the latter days if we didn't turn and recognize our covenant failure and that the sins of our fathers as our own and seek them.

These are the things that would happen in the latter days. And because I have turned aside to look in to the fire of the judgment of the Jewish nation, painful, I can tell you it's painful. I had visited virtually every concentration camp and place of extermination in Europe, every opportunity.

I've been in Auschwitz, Dachau, Bergen-Bergen, Belsen. You name it, I've been there. I've rubbed my face into the grit of the horror of that death not because I'm some masochist who wants to luxuriate in self-pity for the demise of my Jewish people but because I want to know and I want to understand lest these tragedies take place again because God is wanting to communicate something.

If we have not received it in the Word then we have to experience it in fact. You know what the rabbis say about Moses? Why God so honored Moses and said, Moses, Moses, when he turned aside? Sometimes the rabbis get it right. Not often.

But here they say, when a man turns aside to see there's no assurance that he'll ever be able to turn back again to where he was before. There you go. Boom.

There goes your nice evangelical pet doctrines and the way that you have understood the faith. Once you turn aside and see this, God in the midst of fire, in the midst of a humble, ordinary burning bush, you'll not come back to where you were before. Things will be changed radically.

Who knows that if your name then is called that's the end of your stable career, location, business, and uprooting and moving, ascending. So better to not even take the risk and circumvent and not look. And that's where you are.

Nice Christian respectability. But meanwhile, there are numbers who are groaning in Egypt and feeling the lash. And I'm speaking metaphorically, of course, but they're building phantom cities for a pharaoh and spitting out their life, their energy, their time.

They're losing their minds, their insanity. They're suffering tumors and cancers and mental breakdowns, emotional upsets. They're ravaged all around us in the world.

And who is going to deliver them but one who is sent because God sees that he's turned aside. If Moses had not turned aside to see this fire in this bush, he would not subsequently have been invited up to the mount, wreathed in fire, to be with God, come up unto me and be here. There's a seeing and a being, saints, that is critical to life.

This is life. If you don't see and you don't be, what then are you? The seeing and the being is salvation because people are living lives of futility. I'm trying to think of the quotation from an American philosopher, All men live lives of quiet desperation.

It may be quiet, but it's still despair. I understand that suicide is a problem in New Zealand. The statistics are outrageous.

And probably the instances of divorce in the church like America are as great as those in the world. There's a world dying, saints. There's a world in darkness.

There's a world that does not know how to live, does not know how to be, does not know how to see, doesn't know how to examine. It has no purpose. No wonder that they take their lives.

There's no meaning, no significance, and we were made for exactly that. Don't you know? This is salvation, is to have purpose, meaning, call, understanding, significance. Our days are not a mere succession of days.

We're not just manipulable things to be consumers. We have purpose in God. In this life, there are things to come.

There are things that need to be transacted. There's an Israel that's going to be tested and brought to a time of Jacob's trouble. There's a church that must anticipate, be ready, and be able to communicate with this people and explain to them even why they're suffering the ultimate distress that they will.

So, may we be a people who will turn aside to see and ask, Why? God waits to be asked. And the moment that Moses turned aside, his name was called twice. Moses, Moses.

I think the commentators say, When your name is called twice, tremble. It's an ultimate call, and one that will eventuate not only in your suffering, but likely your death. It's a historic and ultimate call.

But ultimacy is what everything is about. Can you imagine a church that is only pedestrian and predictable and not ultimate? We ought to be conveying a reality of an ultimate kind. Not just waiting for the kingdom to come.

It is here already. Not waiting for eternity. We're in it now.

There's something about our faces, our eyes, our voice, our manner that indicates that we have been taken into something of a remarkable and eternal kind and that it needs to be communicated to us.

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