

**Wednesday, March 4, 2020 – Lent Midweek II**  
**“How God Changes Us”**

Exodus 3: 1-14

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Adapted from R. Reed Lessing's "Let My People Go!"

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

What do you want to change in your life? Is it a bad habit? A bad relationship? A bad attitude? A bad situation? A bad decision? What is it that you look at and say, “This just isn’t right; it’s got to change!”? We live in a society that offers instant change. We watch TV and change the channels just like this—click, click, click! We look at our smartphone and change the screen just like this—tap, swipe, pinch! We put food in our microwave and it’s ready to eat just like this—zap, zap, zap! Because we change channels and screens and food so fast we think we should be able to change our lives with just a click, a tap, or a zap!

We’re in a series on the book of Exodus. Today I want to talk with you about how God changes us. God uses the same process with Moses. Note the word process. Change, godly change, is a process. Godly change takes time!

Exodus 2 tells us that one day, when Moses was 40 years old, he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. What does Moses do? Moses kills the Egyptian! The next day Moses sees the same Israelite and thinks he will say, “Thank you Moses! You saved my life!” But he doesn’t! Instead the Israelite is angry. He asks Moses, “Will you kill me too?” The word is out! The Pharaoh finds out! Moses knows he’s going to be taken out! Moses hightails it out of Egypt and ends up working for his father-in-law, Jethro, for 40 years.

That’s where we pick Moses up in Exodus 3:1. “Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law.” For forty years all Moses sees are sheep. For forty years all Moses hears are sheep. For forty years all Moses thinks about are sheep! Talk about getting stuck in a rut! Sheep! Sheep! And more sheep! Moses has to be thinking, “This just isn’t right. It’s got to change!”

It happens to us, too, doesn’t it? We get stuck in ruts. What is it for you? Are you overly critical of other people? Is your spending out of control? Have you lost your ambition to study the Bible, to live a life of integrity, to follow hard after Jesus? Just like Moses, we say, “This just isn’t right. It’s got to change!” But how?

The process (remember process!) of change begins with God's presence. "The Messenger of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush" (Ex 3:2). This is no ordinary Messenger. It's Jesus before he was born in Bethlehem! And this is no ordinary fire. This is the fire of God! The fire of God appears when God calls Gideon and Amos. The fire of God appears when God calls the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus even says that we're baptized with fire—we're baptized with the fire of God! Why is God present in fire? Wherever there is fire you can bet that something happens every single time. And what is that? Change!

What does Moses say? "Here I am!" [Hinanee] (Ex 3:4). Hinanee means, "God, I'm at your service." So Yahweh tells Moses, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I know their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them" (Ex 3:7–8). "I know their suffering." God loves us right where we are. "I have come down." God loves us too much to leave us where we are. He comes down with fire—the power of his Word—even today, to fire us up with devotion and passion and love for Jesus!

The process of change continues with God's plan. "The cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Ex 3:9–10). Moses at forty in Exodus 2? Hinanee! Whatever you want! Moses at eighty in Exodus 3? No way!

Moses replies in Exodus 3:11: "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" God doesn't say, "Moses, where's your confidence? Moses, where's your get up and go? Moses, don't you know you can do anything if you just set your mind to it?"

God doesn't say any of that. Why? Because, "Who am I?" is always the wrong question. When we want to change, "Who am I?" is dead wrong, every single time! What's the right question? "God, who are you?"

Who is this God? He is the God who changes us through a process, asking us to live by faith. He says in Exodus 3:12, "And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you [all] will worship God on this mountain." "You all will worship God on this mountain." This is shocking! We don't need a sign in the future

to convince us of God's plan. We need something right now! Remember! Change is a process! One step at a time!

God says, "You will see my plan unfold when you keep saying, "Hineee! Here I am!" God calls us to keep taking steps toward getting our finances straightened out, repairing that relationship, getting serious about the words we use, being more humble and loving. We will get to the mountain!

Have you ever picked up a piece of plywood? You lift it up and bugs go running and you see all kinds of strange life forms! Like snakes and lizards! What do we do? Throw the plywood down and run!

Change often looks like that. Ugly and scary with all kinds of strange life forms! Snakes and lizards! We don't want to deal with it so we run away and settle for a life of plain vanilla. "I'll stick with the stupid, smelly sheep!

God's provision. Moses has four excuses why he won't change; (1) "I don't know your name" (Ex 3:13–22). God gives Moses his name, "I AM." Jesus is the great I AM. "I am the Bread of Life. I am the Light of the world. I am the resurrection and the life!; (2) "Israel's leaders won't believe me" (Ex 4:1–9). God gives Moses two miracles; the rod that turns into a snake and a leprous hand that heals; [cross and resurrection] (3) "I'm not a fluent speaker" (Ex 4:10–12). God gives Aaron; [God gives us each other, we're not alone] (4) "Somebody else can do it better" (Ex 4:13–17). God says, "Moses, you are the man!"

What are your excuses? "God, I'm too old. God, I'm too young. God, I'm too messed up. God, life has passed me by. My ship sailed! God, it's too late!" The voice from the bush is the voice of the LORD's Messenger— Jesus! Jesus says to us, "I love you! I shed my blood for you! I'm not finished with you. There's work to do!"

In the early nineteenth century, Napoleon Bonaparte was in the middle of a huge battle. His officers said, "If we don't retreat now, we'll be annihilated." Napoleon called his bugler and ordered him, "Sound the retreat." The fourteen-year-old bugler began to cry. Napoleon commanded him again, "Sound the retreat!" The bugler replied, "I was never taught how to sound a retreat. I was only taught how to sound an advance." "In that case," Napoleon

commanded, "Sound an advance!" The bugler sounded an advance, and history records that Napoleon won the battle.

You may be calling on God to sound a retreat, but he only knows how to sound an advance! It's called the fire of God! God is determined to change us through his presence, his plan, and his loving provision. Do you see it? It's the fire of God! What shall we say? How about saying this? "Hinaanee. Here I am." Amen.