

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

4 When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

5 “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” 6 Then he said, “I am the God of your father,[a] the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

7 The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

12 And God said, “I will be with you. 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[b] will worship God on this mountain.”

13 Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

14 God said to Moses, “I am who I am.[c] This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

15 God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord,[d] the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’

“This is my name forever,

the name you shall call me

from generation to generation.

### Take Off Your Shoes

In my opinion a formal living room has got to be the most useless room ever. They were popular at one point. My friend's house had one. It was the room no one could use and it didn't make sense. There across from the formal dining room where we didn't eat was the formal living room where we couldn't live. In that room were all the precious treasures that went untouched, the frilly pillows, fancy furniture, and crystal collection. It cost a fortune to decorate. It was kept cleaner than a museum but no admittance was allowed even if shoes were taken off... No, no, no those were taken off at the door, because of another odd designer trend: white carpet. Even with only socks or special inside slippers - no one entered that room. It as set apart, holy, but for no purpose.

The land on which Moses stood was holy but there was a point to it. God instructs Moses to take off his shoes but why? It isn't because God had created a formal living room and it cost him a fortune with all those frilly pillows and white carpet. It isn't because God is distant. It's because God had come down. He is the God who sees, hears, and knows the sufferings of his people. He is the God who has come down into this cursed world and he makes it holy. He even sets apart Moses for a specific purpose.

I doubt we will ever encounter a burning bush, you may find a formal living room decorated all fancy like. While you might not find a burning bush or an angel telling you to take off your shoes, you do have a close encounter with God. He comes to us. He makes us holy. He sets us apart for a purpose. He isn't some celestial supreme being floating around on a cloud wondering what we are doing on earth. He knows, just as pastor's wife knew when us kids entered that formal living room. Both know but only one wants us close. So take off your shoes, get comfortable

But Moses had to take off his shoes. He's been working for his father in law for 40 years. These aren't his flocks. This is his father in laws flock. Everything Moses does surrounds sheep. He eats sheep, breathes sheep, counts sheep, and even smells like sheep. This is an all new low for Moses. In Israel it was the youngest child in the family, the least important was put in charge to watch the sheep. And Egyptians had a low view of shepherds. Joseph comments to his family when they come, "*Every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians*" (Genesis 46:34). Moses has hit rock bottom from prince of Egypt to lowly shepherd working a dead end job.

Tending his father in laws flocks. Talk about a rut. How did he get here? At 40 he was eager and ready to deliver God's people. He saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite and he killed him hiding his body in the sand. When he saw two Israelites fighting Moses pleaded with them, "*Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?*" And the truth comes out, "*Who made you ruler and judge over us, are you thinking of killing me too?*" And Moses fled. Forty years later, Moses is deep in the wilderness

shepherding his father in laws sheep when *“the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush.”* Moses saw the fire and thought, *“I will go and see this strange sight - why the bush does not burn up.”* The Lord called to him, *“Moses, Moses.” Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.*” This ground has been set aside for a purpose. What for? That comes next.

*I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.*” Moses is eager and willing to serve at 40 but now at 80 he’s not so excited about the prospect. I’d rather stay here with the sheep. *Who am I?* He asks. Moses is excited about leaving the flocks until he finds out what God has called him to do. His initial, “Here am I,” turns into a “Send someone else.” He protests, *“Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”* Moses begins bargaining. It’s the first of five excuses. He’s looking for a way out. He’s afraid. It’s too much to stand before Pharaoh. But God promises, “I am with you.” I am here to deliver and to save. God gives Moses his name. They are on a first name basis. All formality is set aside.

Moses had to take off his shoes. He stunk. In a different way we too have to take off our shoes. We’ve spent some time out in the fields. We make our way through the world and it’s not the filth of the world that follows us it’s the garbage we bring into our life. We eat, breath, and sleep in sin. While we might have grown comfortable with it, it’s an abomination to God. Solomon writes in the book of Proverbs, *“There are six things the Lord hate, seven that are detestable... an abomination to him. Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies.”* Jesus said to the self righteous, *“You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight” (Luke 16:15).*

In a way we take off shoes at the beginning of worship, when we confess, “I have sinned against you in thought, word, and action.” I stink. The problem, however is that it may be easier and we may be more eager to tend the flock. The only one who likes change is the two year old and their diaper. We don’t like change but that’s repentance. It’s sorrow over wrong and a desire to change one’s life. I’m not saying we set aside portions of our life in which to remain pure and perfect like that formal living room, I’m saying, “you’re whole life should be set apart for God.” God calls us to be holy. An impossible task, like standing before the world power and telling Pharaoh to let God’s people go.

It can be terrifying to stand before those who hate you, want nothing more than to kill you, and yet in spite of this confessing Christ. Denying fear won’t do anything, fear must be replaced with trust in someone or something else. That means we don’t need a motivational speaker barking orders. God doesn’t tell us try harder. Do more. Be stronger. He does tell us, “I am with you.” He is the God

who has come down. He takes the focus off ourselves, who we are, what we can do, and he tells us to focus on God, who is with us.

God who wants to be with his people. God sees, hears, and knows. God has come down for the purpose of lifting up his people delivering them from Egypt for a purpose and to a place. He is delivering them to the Promised Land. Here we have the famous words fashioned into song, “Eretz zavat chalav, chalav u'dvash” - a land flowing with milk and honey.

God calls to Moses, “*Moses, Moses.*” In Hebrew when you call on someone you care about you say their name twice, “Moses, Moses.” This happens to multiple times, “Samuel, Samuel”, “Simon, Simon,” “Martha, Martha.” God wants Moses to understand that he cares for him, that he is powerful to save. God says, “if Pharaoh wants to get to you, he’ll have to go through me first.” God wants to be with his people. God has a habit of appearing to shepherds at night. While Moses does not share the burning bush experience with anyone, those shepherds on Christmas run and tell everyone. Emmanuel - God is with us. God has come down. He’s not hiding in a bush like Adam and Eve after they fell into sin. He’s hidden himself in human flesh. He has come down into a cursed world to make it holy.

Here he came to purify for himself a people. He got to work, taking sin and sickness upon himself. He even got down on his hands and knees to wash his disciples feet and all this before he gives his life on the cross. **All this before he leads his people home to a Promised Land far greater than anything in Israel.**

God sees, hears, and knows what you are going through. There are many different ways for him to deliver. He either provides healing or deliverance into a new land, a new home. That is the hope we have. Afraid? Who wouldn’t be. There is no sense denying the fear but we can replace fear with trust in the Father. The Father who sent his son into a world cursed by sin to suffer in every way we do. The Son who set to work saving us.

He comes to us in his word. We have an opportunity to come before God, stand on holy ground, ground he has made holy and see in his word, his work in saving. What makes church good is not our work in coming but God’s work. We come to know God. This isn’t intellectual exercise for the sake of information transfer. Church is not a learning. We don’t come to church and spend time with God only because of what we can learn from them - would you only spend time with your spouse because of what you could learn from them? My wife would be with me five minutes. This is our God who wants to be with us. Who wants to be known by us. He wants others to know us as well.

He could deliver us. He could snap his fingers and bring this world to an end and take care of all problems immediately... So why doesn’t he? It’s for the same reason he delivered Israel through

Moses and multiple meetings with Pharaoh, he wants to save those in Egypt as well. He wants to provide an opportunity to save even Pharaoh. If God came, judgment day right now, how many people would not know? God wants all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. He wants to save as many people as possible and that's why he calls us into service, not so we can all be pastors or teachers but so we can serve wherever we are at. So we can serve and then be served.

Maybe your act of service seems like a formal living room - no point, no purpose. It doesn't matter. You're made holy. You're set apart by God, for God. Who calls you into his presence. Who makes you holy. Who wants you close to him. So unlike a formal living room in which we were not allowed to enter come close - enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. For he is with us. He is for us. He has saved us and will deliver us. Amen.