

Sermon for Advent Midweek #1

Date: December 5, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

First Reading: Exodus 3:1–14

Second Reading: Isaiah 25:6–9

Gospel Reading: John 15:1–8

Sermon Text: Exodus 3:1–14

Sermon Title: Old Testament Christmas



Psalm: Psalm 24

Hymns:

O Great I Am, Almighty Word (*Tune: 344*)

LSB 810 – O God of God, O Light of Light

LSB 338 – Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

LSB 771 – Be Still, My Soul, before the Lord

LSB 358 – From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

LSB 357 – O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

LSB 349 – Hark the Glad Sound

Liturgy:

Special



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Text: Exodus 3:1–14

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.”

When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!”

And he said, “Here I am.”

Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” And he said, “I am the God of your 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 at God.

Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

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

He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

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Grace to you, from the Price of Peace. Amen.

Have you ever noticed the similarities between the reading we heard from Exodus , and Christmas? There was in the same country as Horeb a shepherd abiding in the field, keeping watch over the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, by night. The name of this shepherd was Moses. And behold, the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. When the shepherd Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight, and as he drew near to look, the voice of the Lord came, saying, “I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.” And the shepherd Moses trembled and hid his face, for the glory of the Lord made him greatly afraid. And the Angel of the Lord said to him, “Fear not, for I have surely seen the ill-treatment of My people that are in Egypt and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now, come, I will send you to Egypt, and this will be a sign unto you: this bush that burns with fire and yet is not consumed.”

If this account and the account of Christmas seem a little bit similar to you, they should, because it is the same Lord who is present in both. Remember the Angel of the Lord is no ordinary angel. In fact He is not really an angel at all. Generally, when we use the word angel, we’re thinking of those created heavenly beings who serve God and do His will. The word angel actually “messenger” or “one who speaks the Word of God.” Which is why, in the Book of Revelation, the term ‘angel’ is used to refer to the pastors of the seven churches in chapters one and two.

Here, the term angel is used to refer to the Son of God, the One who is the ultimate messenger and spokesman of the Father. Moses consistently refers to this ‘Angel’ as God. This is the Angel of the Lord, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is Jesus Christ before He was born into this world, sent by the Father to reveal His Word.

John the disciple expresses a very similar thought in the opening verses of his Gospel when he refers to Jesus as the Word that became flesh, and dwelt among us.¹ As the uncreated, eternal, Divine Angel of the Lord, Jesus is both the messenger and the message. He is God the Father’s final Word to us, a Word of love, forgiveness and of life to the repentant sinner.

So what we have here, in this account, is the preincarnate Jesus speaking to Moses. He, the Son of God, descends to earth as He did at Christmas. He does this in a very concrete and physical way. He appears as a flame of fire within the branches of a bush. He, Jesus – the Light of the world. When laid in the wood of a

1 John 1:1-5

manger, the Lord came down to our place, our level. Just as He did in that burning bush, when the eternal and the temporal touched, He appeared in a complete and eternally significant way at Bethlehem to come into contact with mankind. He took on an earthly form that Moses, and later we, could understand and receive.

In the incarnation, the Creator entered His creation in a way that sinful people could approach Him without fear, without being destroyed. The burning bush is a prophetic event. It foretells of the time when Christ would descend to this world again and permanently take on our human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

This event in Exodus also foretells the reason for our Lord's birth. The Lord Jesus announces to Moses from the bush that He has come to save His people, to rescue them from their enemies. In the same way, Christ came down at Christmas to rescue all mankind. Joseph and Mary were told,

You shall call His name Jesus,
for He will save His people from their sins.²

Our Lord descended to deliver us from our enemies who have enslaved us. He came to release us from the power of our taskmaster Satan, and to free us from the oppressive bondage of sin and death. By His holy incarnation, Jesus becomes the new Moses, who leads us out of the kingdom of darkness, through the waters of Holy Baptism – the Red Sea, and into the light of the Promised Land, a new creation. The One who appeared in a flame of fire said,

Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life.³

When Moses looked at the bush, he saw it was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. This tells us two things:

First, it teaches us that the union between God and man, that took place in the conception and birth of Christ, is eternal and everlasting. Jesus is forever both fully Divine and fully human. Just as the bush not burned up, so the union between God and man in Christ will never end. He is true man, even now as He sits at the right hand of the Father, and He always will be true man, our human brother.

Second, the fact that the bush was not consumed teaches us that Christ came into our flesh not to bring judgment on mankind but to bring salvation.⁴ This was not a fire that destroys. It was a fire that revealed and proclaimed the Word of deliverance and life. Jesus said:

2 Matthew 1:21

3 John 8:12

4 John 3:16-17

God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

It is written in the Scriptures, no sinner can see the holy God and live.⁵ In the burning bush, and even more so in the Holy Child of Mary, sinful man can and does look on the face God. Trusting in this “God in the flesh” you are made holy and given eternal life. By taking on our human nature Jesus did not consume us. He permeates and filled our lives so that we share in His life. He became like us so that we may become like Him.

Jesus revealed His name to Moses from the bush. He said:

Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I am has sent me to you.’⁶

Our Savior is the great I AM, the one who is, and who was, and who is to come.⁷ Jesus is the revelation of the Divine Name. He teaches us:

I am the Good Shepherd.⁸

I am the Light of the world.⁹

I am the vine; you are the branches.¹⁰

He who revealed Himself to Moses in the branches of a burning bush has now taken on your flesh and blood so you can become His branches; so you can be joined to Him and draw your life from Him. Apart from Jesus, the branches wither and die and are burned in judgment.

Abiding in Jesus, the branches thrive and share in the fire of His divine life. Jesus Christ is indeed a Holy Vine that took root in Bethlehem, and has now spread through all the earth. Truly the burning bush is a great sign, a great foretelling, of our Lord’s Advent, a living prophecy of His incarnation.

As you prepare to celebrate this Nativity of our Lord, may God grant that He who is the flame of fire may light your hearts with repentance, faith and holy love.

In Jesus’ name.

Amen.

5 Hebrews 12:14
6 Exodus 3:14
7 Revelation 1:8
8 John 10:11
9 John 8:12
10 John 15:5

