

## McCabe United Methodist Church

Part 2, Ghost Stories: Tales of Holy Visions & Divine Encounters:  
2017 Summer Series

### ***“Who Am I?”***

Sermon on Exodus 3:1-15 (7/08 & 7/09/17)

Pastor Mark Ehrmantraut

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*Let us Pray:*

*Holy and Powerful God, God of mercy and compassion, may the words of my mouth and may the meditations on each of hearts this morning be acceptable in your sight. You are our Rock. You are our Redeemer. Amen.*

Billy Graham is a name many people know. At this point Billy Graham says he's retired. He says he's nearing the end of his life.

Many people know of Billy Graham. He's a world-renowned evangelist. He used to speak to packed stadiums on national TV. There are very possibly people here right now who came to Christ because of Billy Graham.

Billy Graham was asked to speak at Cambridge University. Cambridge is a prestigious school known around the world.

Billy Graham doesn't have doctoral degrees. Technically, he didn't go to seminary.

Billy Graham the world-renowned evangelist confided in a close friend. He said he didn't feel qualified to address the sophisticated thinkers at Cambridge. He said he'd never felt so inadequate, so unprepared for a mission.

He prayed for God's help. He prayed that God would use him to share the simple truth.

Billy Graham's message was typically tied to the core of John 3:16:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,  
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

It's the heart of the Gospel message.

Even though we are broken and we sin, God loves us so much. Jesus died on the cross so we might truly live.

Billy Graham was nervous as he was preparing to share a message with the scholars at Cambridge. He was hesitating, saying: **Who am I?**

- ✓ *Am I worthy of bringing this message?*
- ✓ **Who am I?**
- ✓ *I don't have all the training and degrees these people have.*
- ✓ **Who am I?**
- ✓ *I'm just a farm boy from North Carolina.*

*It's a good reminder, isn't it?*

- ✚ *God moving and working in and around all of us.*
- ✚ *God at work in and through every day people.*
- ✚ *God not just looking for put together, perfect people, but God seeking people with imperfections and insecurities.*
- ✚ *God seeking people with bruises and blemishes...*

## **Who am I?**

It was the question in this morning's Scripture. Moses questioning God when in Exodus 3 God said:

*Moses. Come here. I've chosen you <sup>v. 10</sup> God says: Now go. I'm sending you. You must lead my people, and <sup>v. 11</sup>: But Moses protested: **Who am I?***

In some Bible translations, it's clear that Moses didn't protest once, or twice. Moses rebuffed God three times. *But God, **Who am I?** And what should I tell the people?*

It makes me pause and consider: How often am I like Moses?

Like the beginning of today's Scripture, I'm thrilled and amazed at the burning bush, and then, without missing a beat, I'm dismissing the miracle. I make it about me and my own insecurities, instead of about God and God's miraculous might.

When God calls to me, how often do I question: ***But God, Who am I?***

Like in today's Scripture, when God says:

- ✚ *I can't stand the things happening here...*
- ✚ *My people are being hurt and oppressed.*
- ✚ *My people are lonely and scared.*
- ✚ *My people are hungry and mistreated.*

How often, when God asks me to do something, do I say, ***but God, Who am I?***

- ✓ I'm not even very smart.
- ✓ I don't have very much money.
- ✓ I don't have time for that.
- ✓ ***Who am I?***
  
- ✓ They brought that on themselves.
- ✓ There are programs for that.
- ✓ Or, I'm just flat out scared, or feeling insecure, or too tired.
- ✓ ***Who am I?***
  
- ✓ Who am I to worry about other people's business?
- ✓ Who am I to be concerned about the hurting and broken hearted?
- ✓ Who am I to step up and step out and help the sinner, or my enemy?
- ✓ Who am I to stand up for Jesus?

Goodness knows, I can relate to Moses and some of those negative voices.

Some of you know my brother Mike...

After 8 or 9 years of wrestling with God's call on my life to be a pastor, I finally gave in. I would do what I needed to do to be a pastor.

I was calling my family to let them know. When I got to my brother, the picture is still vivid in my mind.

I was standing outside our place in Michigan. It was over the Christmas vacation. I called my brother and told him I was answering God's call on my life. His knee jerk response was a quick cough followed by: "Are you even qualified for that?" In other words, **Who am I?** ☺

- ✚ And yet, like Moses, it wasn't about who I thought I was.
- ✚ It wasn't even about who other people thought I was.
- ✚ This was about God seeking me, and calling me.

✚ ***This IS about God sending even me.***

✚ I could draw strength regardless of how insecure I felt...

✚ I CAN draw strength hearing God's words, as he said to Moses:  
***I will be with you. Receive this sign.  
Receive this strength from me.***

And then I can quickly revert to protesting saying: Yeah. Wait. But....  
But **Who am I?** I can't go...

- ✓ *What if they don't believe me?*
- ✓ *What if they don't like me?*
- ✓ *What if they don't think I'm good enough?*
- ✓ *What if they ask who sent me?*
- ✓ *What if they hurt my feelings?*
- ✓ *What if... What if... What if...???*
- ✓ ***Who am I...???***

Our Scripture this morning started with Moses basically in exile. He'd killed an Egyptian, then he fled when his own people called him out on it. At this point, Moses was minding his own business. He was all alone tending sheep in the wilderness, and it was there that it happened.

A Holy vision. A Divine Encounter. Exodus 3:2-5

*<sup>2</sup>The angel of the Lord appeared (to Moses) in the flame of fire from the middle of a burning bush.*

That would get your attention, wouldn't it? 😊

*<sup>3</sup>Moses stared in amazement. The bush didn't burn up. Moses stared saying "This is amazing! I have to see this." <sup>4</sup>And When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to Moses from the middle of the bush "Moses! Moses!" Moses replied, "Here I am."*

That's a good response, isn't it? God calls and we respond: "Here I am."  
Our Scripture continues:

*<sup>5</sup>Then the Lord warned, "Don't come any closer. Take off your sandals. You're standing on holy ground."*

In the middle of nowhere, all alone, that's where Moses encountered the Spirit of God speaking to him.

- ✚ Don't come any closer.
- ✚ Take off your sandals.
- ✚ You're standing on holy ground.

Friends, right here, right now, we are sitting and standing on holy ground. The Spirit of God is active and alive and stirring.

**God is seeking us and sending us.**

Right here, right now, God is calling to us: Mark. Jenny. Tim. Barb. Marilyn. Jim. Insert **your name** here.

Right here right now, God is calling us.

Right here right now, we have a decision to make. We each need to decide.

We need to decide:

✓ ***Who am I...???***

And We need to decide:

✓ ***Who is God...???***

Because whatever we decide, ***we ARE responding.***

We might be responding saying,

- ✓ *I'm not good enough, or*
- ✓ *I'm not ready, or*
- ✓ *They don't deserve it.*

Or we might respond basically saying:

- ✓ *I don't trust God enough, or*
- ✓ *God isn't sufficient, or*
- ✓ *well, you get the picture...*

OR

We might respond like Moses in Exodus 3 when he said:

✚ ***This IS AMAZING!!***

The awesome power and presence of the Spirit of God, seeking us, and calling us, and sending us, turning the ordinary into extraordinary.

Here we are standing on Holy Ground.

Here we are called by God and being sent by God.

And here we are in worship to praise God, to encounter God, to seek forgiveness and healing, to give thanks for the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, to give thanks for God's work through Jesus Christ.

And here we are in worship, too, preparing to be sent by God, preparing to be sent by God into the world to make a difference here and now, and for all eternity.

Friends, we are challenged to not let our own insecurities, fears, and anxieties get in the way and hold us back.

- ✚ We are called and sent to live our faith.
  - ✚ We are challenged to trust God and move beyond “Who am I?”
  - ✚ Because God created you and God loves you.
  - ✚ In Christ, you are a new creation.
  - ✚ In Christ, you are complete and alive.
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- ✚ We are no longer slaves to sin and death. We can be born again, made new. We are fearfully and wonderfully made.
  - ✚ We are more than conquerors. In Christ, we can do all things through Him who gives us strength.

In Christ, we are loved, forgiven, and secure. In Christ, we are adopted, justified, redeemed, reconciled, and chosen. In Christ, we are victorious, filled with joy and peace. In Christ, we discover the true meaning of life.

We ask God: **Who am I?**

And like Moses, instead of God explaining to Moses who Moses was... Instead of God explaining everything God has given to help make Moses up to the task ahead of him... God basically answers saying: *Moses, I will be with you.* It's a reassurance. And God follows with: *Now quit making excuses and do something because I AM who I AM.*

- ✚ I AM is sending you and I AM is sufficient.
- ✚ A Holy Vision. A divine encounter.
- ✚ God doesn't ask Who are YOU?
- ✚ Instead God says: I AM.
- ✚ And because I AM is sufficient. You are sufficient. You are up to the task God has given you.

So, I guess the question before us is twofold...

First: In your own life, how do you answer the question: **Who am I?**

Second: When God says "I AM who I AM"; is that sufficient for you?

- God created you. God loves you, and you are sufficient.
- Will you step out and step up into living and serving in ways that are bigger than yourself?

Let's pray:

Dear God, You alone are sufficient. We come this morning in awe of everything about you. Turn our hearts and our minds, turn our beliefs and our actions from questioning who we are, and turn them to who you are. Give us the eyes to see and the ears to hear how you're calling and sending us. Direct us where our next steps should go this morning and in the week ahead, and may we faithfully respond. Amen.