

Sept. 29, 2013 - God's Name
Exodus 2:23-25; 3:10-15; 4:10-17

“What Is God's Purpose for YOU? - 1”

This week I'm going to *begin* with a Sermon Challenge: right off the bat *Why this* is this week's sermon challenge will become clear as together we think about what God is saying to us through today's Scriptural story. Here's the challenge: Begin a process *this week* which will help you discover or re-discover God's purpose for you in this particular time in your life. Begin a process *this week* which will help you discover or re-discover God's purpose for you *in this particular time* in your life.

You've probably already figured out from where this sermon challenge comes. It comes from these stories about Moses. Moses' purpose was a very large one. He was to go to the king of Egypt and tell him that God wanted him, the king of Egypt, to let the Hebrew slaves go. As hard, some would say as impossible, as that purpose was, that's only part one of what God calls Moses to do. Part two was to lead the Hebrew people through a very inhospitable wilderness to the promised land. As it turned out, this second purpose was way harder and took far longer than the first. Who could have predicted that?

Moses' purposes were both very large; that's why they got written up. Moseses are very rare, so it's unlikely that God's purpose for any one of us will be that large; but you never know. Still, I believe that God does have a purpose for each one of us individually and for us together as the people of God in this place. And I believe those purposes are vitally important for God's mission in the world. The purpose that God has in mind for you will make a significant difference in somebody else's life—and in yours.

So let's go to the story of Moses. First, the context. Big leap in the story from where we left off. In Genesis God makes promises to Abraham. God promises to give Abraham land, more descendants than he can possibly count, and to bless all families through his family. Each one of those promises is endangered. First, year after year goes by with no heir at all. Then, finally, Isaac is born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. And as the years go by, Abraham's descendants multiply into twelve tribes. Because of severe famine those twelve tribes wind up living in Egypt where one of their own, Joseph, is the number two man in the Egyptian kingdom.

Do you remember from your high school history class that every once in awhile a new dynasty arose in Egypt? Well, that happened. And the new ruling class fears these foreigners living in their land because they have indeed become too numerous to count. In response to this fear, the new king enslaves the descendants of Abraham.

That's the world into which Moses is born. There is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that Moses worshiped the God of Abraham or even knew anything about the God of Abraham. All we know is that when he was young, he was a hothead, and now that he has matured some, he is living on the lamb out in the sticks.

This is the man to whom God gives such a large purpose. What are his qualifications? Moses doesn't feel up to the task, doesn't think he's qualified at all, not that you can blame him. He asks all kinds of questions and raises all kinds of objections. And maybe that's a good thing. If he had not asked, "What if they want to know who exactly sent me and on whose authority I am acting?" If he hadn't asked, he wouldn't have received God's name. Or if he hadn't asked, "What if they don't believe me?" Then he wouldn't have received the resources God gave to him. Or if he hadn't asked, "How am I going to accomplish this since I'm not a good speaker." Then he wouldn't have been given Aaron's help. Asking God questions is a good thing. Even objecting to what you hear God calling you to do can be a good thing. The least you can say for it is it's Biblical.

So what *are* Moses' qualifications? Doesn't matter. What matters is that God has a purpose for Moses, and God is with him. As the cliché goes, God doesn't call the qualified; God qualifies the called. So what are your qualifications? Doesn't matter. What matters is that God has a purpose for you and that God is with you. Jesus by the way did the same thing his father did. It's hard to read the Gospels and imagine that Jesus' disciples were anything but unqualified, often incompetent, and sometimes even faithless.

So here's the challenge again: Begin a process *this week* which will help you discover or re-discover God's purpose for you in this particular time in your life. You know what? Let's begin that process right now. Pair up with somebody. Starting right now I want you to think about what you might say when, at the end of this service, I ask you to turn to your partner and say to them, "I wonder if God's purpose for you at this time of your life might include . . ."

Now, I want you to notice how gentle that is. All you are doing is raising a possibility, asking a question. You might be off base. Or you might confirm something the person to whom you are speaking has been thinking about. You might even provide a new insight for that person. At the end of the service I'm going to ask you each to turn to your partner and say, "I wonder if God's purpose for at this time in your life you might include . . ."

There are a couple other things I want to say about this Scripture. Bullet points really. 1. God knows the needs of God's people. God hears their cries and their moaning. The Scripture does not say they are crying out to God, only that they are crying out. God hears them. Now, you can fault God for God's timing. Who knows for how many years this crying and moaning went on before God calls Moses. But God does hear. And 2. God does act. God breaks in to save God's people. Not in a Cecil B. DeMille fire and brimstone way. But God does act. God acts by calling otherwise unqualified people to accomplish God's purposes. Just like God is calling you and me and us together as Living Water Lutheran Church to accomplish God's purposes. God acts. And 3. When absolutely necessary, God employs powerful signs. The staff turned into a serpent and back again. The plagues. The parting of the Red Sea. When necessary, God employs powerful signs, using otherwise unqualified, even incompetent people like us to carry them out.