

## **Who Am I? Exodus 3:1-15**

### **When You Disagree with God...**

The United States is known as the land of freedom and we highly value individual liberty. This means you can have your own opinions and freely express your perspectives and exchange them with others. You can agree with someone on certain issues as well as disagree. I don't know if this is a good thing or not, but nowadays, people even disagree about facts. So technically, we can disagree about anything. So, let me ask you a question. "Do you ever disagree with God?" This question may seem too general, so let me reframe it. For Christians, the Bible is the primary source through which to know God and God's will. Right? "Have you ever read your Bible and come across something that bothered you? Something that made you uncomfortable? Something you disagreed with?" For me, one thing that still bothers me is that God ordered genocide or ethnic cleansing of the Canaanites. (Deut7:2) I know there are many theological interpretations of this command, but I still can't agree with God on this.

Let me ask you the same question again. "Do you ever disagree with God? Is it o.k. to disagree with God?" As good Christians, you may never even think of disagreeing with God! "How dare you disagree with God!" We are the followers of Jesus and we are supposed to follow and obey God's commands, whatever they are. That's faith. But many biblical narratives including today's story show that God doesn't mind if we disagree with God.

### **Moses Disagree with God and God doesn't mind!**

Today's text is the well-known story of God calling Moses through the burning bush. As we all know, Moses failed his first attempt to help his people and ran away from Egypt. Now, he was in his self-imposed witness protection program, hiding out from the Egyptian authorities back home. He didn't want to be found, so he became no one working in the middle of nowhere. While Moses was keeping the sheep, a bush caught his eye because the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. And God called him out of the bush.

"I've come to help," said the Lord. "My heart is broken with the pain of my people, so I have come to help. To set them free." "Great," thought Moses. He wondered "what's a bush going do against a mighty nation like Egypt?" "I've come to help," says the voice, "I'm sending you." Moses stutters "Say what?" "I am sending you" the Lord answered. Then Moses disagreed. "Lord, I just follow sheep. I'm not a hero. Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" He disagreed with God. He strongly disagreed with God about himself.

We don't often disagree with God about God. We agree God created the world. We agree God loves the world and us. We agree God sent Jesus Christ to save us and that all who believe in Him will be saved, but we don't often agree with God about ourselves. Do we?

When God says you are sinners, we don't like it because we feel that we are better than that. But at the same time, we often disagree with God when God says we are saints because we feel that we are not that good either. We strongly disagree with God when God wants to send us on a great mission for the transformation of the world, because we know ourselves well and feel that we are unfit for this great task and also incapable of carrying out such a great mission.

Do you know the Mission Statement of the United Methodist Church? "The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by proclaiming the good news of God's grace and by exemplifying Jesus' command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world." What do you think

of this mission? We may think that this mission statement sounds great, but too big for us! “Who am I to transform the world? Who am I that I seek the fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world?”

Moses felt the same way. As we all know, Moses failed. He failed miserably, lost everything and became a fugitive. The trauma of failure still held him back. Maybe he just wanted to forget his past and be forgotten. As the years passed, the time under the hot sun and dry air of the wilderness eroded his memories enough to forget. Maybe he forgot what he did, where he came from, and even who he was. So, when God said, “I am sending you for a great mission to liberate my people from Egypt”, Moses disagreed with God. He offered reasons why he should not be the one chosen to liberate the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses strongly disagreed with God and God didn't mind.

### **God invites Moses into a genuine conversation for a great mission!**

It's o.k. to disagree with God. God doesn't mind our disagreements. In fact, God invites us into deeper conversation, a genuine dialogue with God through our disagreement, argument, and even challenge. In this conversation with Moses, God didn't dominate the conversation. God honored Moses' insights as an essential part of shaping the mission. God moved along with Moses and even adapted God's original plan. When Moses expressed his unworthiness for this mission, God assured Moses that God will be with him. When Moses said that he had never been an eloquent speaker, God proposed his brother Aaron to be his spokesperson. God's way of leading people is not dictated solely by God's will and word. Through this intimate conversation, God modified God's plan while Moses also reconsidered his identity and embarked on his journey for God's mission.

Disagreeing with God is o.k., but not having a conversation with God at all, is not. If you don't have a genuine dialogue with God, there is no chance to disagree with God at all. The real danger for many Christians and churches including Asbury today, is spiritual stagnation coupled with spiritual anesthesia. We may forget who we are in relation to God. We no longer grow spiritually and we don't dream of what is possible for us to do and be in God. We remain content with what we do and our current spiritual state. That's the condition of spiritual stagnation with spiritual anesthesia. At this point, I would like to invite you to examine the condition of your soul.

John Wesley would open every small group meeting with the question “How is it with your soul?” This is not the question, “how are you?” To answer the question “How is it with your soul?”, we need to reflect on our life and habits. What are the things that you do that bring your soul closer God? What things are you doing that put a wedge between God and yourselves? When was the last time you felt the presence of God and had a deep engagement with God? Do you clearly know God's calling for you? How is it with your soul really?

I can tell that Asbury UMC is a good church. Kind and caring people. A wonderful choir and music director. Excellent church leadership. We are a quite-well established church. We have our annual routines and we are pretty good at keeping them. Rally day, Stewardship Sunday, Church Bazaar, Thanksgiving Day, Advent, Christmas Eve and so forth. There's always something happening at Asbury. But we also need to think “Is this what God calls us to do? Do our ministries reflect God's calling for Asbury?” Like Moses who was content his routine life in the wilderness, we may be content in our comfort zone, while forgetting God's calling for a greater mission.

The Good News is that God still invites us into a deeper conversation through the Bible, through prayer, through a dialogue with one another and even through the voices of strangers. God may inspire you through a conversation. God may challenge you through a sermon. You may agree with God or disagree with God, but through that engagement, God will talk with you and help you to remember who you really are and God will work with us for God's mission. During the week, think of "how is it with your soul?" and set aside a little more time to talk with God. God will surely enjoy a conversation with you. Amen.