

Come, Now I Will Send You

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Preacher: Hilary Roath

[0 : 00] This is the AM service on the 25th of January 1998. The preacher is Hilary Roth. Her sermon is entitled, Come, Now I Will Send You, and is from Exodus chapter 3, verses 7 to 20.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. If I ask you today to think about Moses, to picture him in your minds, what do you see?

When I tried to do this, I saw a tall, handsome, fine figure of a man. I saw a born leader. I saw a larger than life character. And I mean that literally, because the first image of Moses that came to my mind, he was actually 20 to 30 feet tall, appearing before me in full technicolor. Charlton Heston in the Ten Commandments left a very big impression on me. And I can still remember going on a primary school excursion to see the amazing Ten Commandments. And Moses is portrayed in this film as a mighty man of God, which is true. But it is the Moses in today's passage that we read in Exodus that I really warm to, that I can relate to.

Here is Moses who is a real person, like you and like me, who has some good points, but has plenty of weaknesses too. The book of Exodus tells how Israel escaped from Egypt with God's help and power. And the human instrument that God used for this escape was Moses. The mighty army that God sent against the enormous force and power of Egypt was Moses. Don't you feel sorry for him already?

But I think if we're honest, I bet it's a feeling of sympathy mixed with a feeling of relief. I'm glad God doesn't ask me to do things like that.

[2 : 42] Moses was leading a quiet life as a shepherd. We think he was about 80 years old at the time, so that doesn't leave many of us off the hook, does it?

Moses was married with children and he was living far away from Egypt. He settled into a shepherd's life in Midian, content with the family of Jethro the priest. But God had not forgotten Moses.

And on this particular day, nothing exciting was going on for him. What he was doing that day was matter-of-fact daily work. Moses was keeping the flock, we are told, of his father-in-law Jethro the priest of Midian. He had led the flock beyond the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

He was just doing his work. Nothing out of the ordinary when God appeared. Do you remember what had happened to Moses? He had killed an Egyptian and he had to flee because the Pharaoh would have killed him. And so he is in Midian 40 years later.

And life as a shepherd had become routine. And there we have it. There we are told the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a burning bush. God appears to Moses.

[4 : 30] He had seen the bush. He had seen the bush. It seemed to be on fire. He watches it, expecting it to turn to ashes.

But to his amazement, it burns on. God had caught his attention. And then we read that Moses says, I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why this bush is not burned up.

And it is now when God has got Moses' attention that God presents himself to Moses.

And we read, when the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see. God called to him out of the bush. Moses, Moses. And he said, here I am. And there are all sorts of ways that God gets our attention.

[5 : 41] And I have known lots of couples who have had, when they gave birth, God got their attention. When their first child is born, that miracle of birth, and their responsibility as parents, the drawing together of their lives at this time, all combine to get their attention.

And the reality of God, and they need to be in a right relationship with him, happens at that time. God gets their attention.

And I've known a few people, very few I'm sorry to say, for whom good fortune has caused them to see God's spirit moving in their lives.

But unfortunately for most of us, it takes a tragedy to get our attention. But in these tragedies, we often find the face of God and the love of God.

It's as though in these tragedies, we are meeting God beyond the wilderness. God does not bring these tragedies.

[6 : 59] But God uses these tragedies to get our attention. And he often presents himself to us in the midst of tragedy.

So you see, God has to get our attention before he can present himself to us.

And the way that he gets our attention is so varied, so miraculously varied. But he is always, always looking for that opportunity to present himself.

And it comes when we give our attention. When we give him our attention. When we turn aside and see whatever burning bush is there.

God called Moses by name out of the burning bush. Moses, Moses, he said.

[8 : 07] Moses said, here I am. And then God said, come no closer. Remove your sandals from your feet.

For the place on which you are standing is holy ground. And God said, I am the God of your father. The God of Abraham.

The God of Isaac. And the God of Jacob. Do you remember that day? When the Sadducees came to Jesus.

One of the main theological positions of the Sadducees. Was that they believed that there was no resurrection.

And they challenged Jesus' teaching that day. On eternal life. Life beyond death. The only authority that they would acknowledge.

[9 : 08] Was that of Moses. Moses. But Jesus. Demolished their theories. He did it with amazing and crushing power.

By pointing. To this passage. That we've read today. I am the God of your father. The God of Abraham.

The God of Isaac. And the God of Jacob. He said in effect. What did God mean then?

When he described himself as the God of men. Who had died long ago. Doesn't he infer that they are still alive?

He is not the God. Of dead people. He is the God. Of living people. Therefore. Therefore when he said.

[10 : 07] I am. The God of your fathers. He must have meant that they were all existing somewhere. Somewhere within his care.

The dead. Are only the living. Who have passed through. The experience of dying. Which is as definite.

And specific. As birth. Death. Death is not an act. Is an act. Not a state.

It is a transition. Not a condition. Death is like a passage. Across a bridge. Someone has said once. Death is no more than if. As if in an express train. A person were to suddenly. To stand up. And take off their coat. Fold it up.

[11 : 06] And throw it out of the window. And then go on with their journey. Without it. Without it. Without it. Down. There are things. And God spoke to Moses.

Moses. Moses hid his face. To look at God. that would be quite an understatement I would have thought can you imagine the fright he got he would have been terrified because I know I would have been and God said the cry of the people has come to me I have seen their oppression God was moving I have seen I have heard I know I have come down to deliver them I will bring them up God knows the condition of his people Israel God is aware he has intimate knowledge of his people he claims them he calls them my people

I have come down I will bring them up and if Moses was terrified at the beginning of his encounter with God he would have squeaked with fright at God's next sentence so come I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt do you notice that change the flow changed direction it changed direction abruptly as God revealed his method to bring about the freedom of his people I have come down I will send you Moses would have been a shocked and a very unhappy man at this point the idea would have staggered him he could mind a flock of sheep but never

emancipate a nation so Moses begins a dialogue with God a dialogue that has a definite pattern to it a pattern that we can see the agony that Moses goes through as he comes to terms with his call and a pattern in which we can see the infinite patience of God to the frailness of his people Moses comes up with four objections four reasons why he should not undertake the task to which God had called him to his lack of fitness who am I that I should go his lack of words what should I say his lack of authority they will not believe me lack of power of speech I'm not eloquent but Moses finally blows it when in desperation he says oh Lord please send someone else and then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses but how is God's anger expressed God accommodates him okay says God Aaron your brother can speak well he shall speak for you to the people if I am not enough for you Moses I will give you Aaron but take up your staff Moses you are going anyway and I will be with you let's look a little more closely at Moses excuses excuse number one he's not capable of doing the task the confidence of Moses youth had gone the awesome responsibility to which he had been called overwhelmed him was it genuine humility or was it lack of faith in God's ability and God's wisdom and the best promise that God could give he gave

[16:17] Moses he said I will certainly be with you and this promise of God's presence is throughout the Bible in Genesis in Joshua in Jeremiah in Haggai and in Matthew do we need to ask for more but it was not enough for Moses so God promised Moses that he and his people would come back to that very spot that very mountain and there they would worship God enough assurance no Moses had only begun his excuses but we can't identify with Moses feelings can't we I suspect that we probably personally felt as Moses did inferior to for such holy and difficult tasks perhaps to which God has called us excuse number two

Moses Moses Moses has no knowledge he said of God's name and Moses second excuse seemed reasonable enough he didn't know God's name and every deity in those ancient days had its own personal name and the name revealed something of the character of the deity Moses felt that without a name he had no message to give to the Israelites and isn't this true for us too we don't think we know enough we don't think we've experienced enough we don't think that we have deep enough faith we just don't think that we have anything to say so God's answers to Moses excuse here was to reveal to him his personal name and the name that God gave to Moses that day was I am who

I am say to the Israelites God says I am has sent you and the meaning of this name has fascinated Bible scholars down through the centuries excuse number three suppose the people will not believe me or listen to me and Moses had every reason to expect that the people wouldn't believe him so there was legitimacy in his excuse and what Moses is actually saying is Lord is there anything in my life that would verify what I'm saying they won't believe that you've spoken to me and we know that feeling don't we because we are always conscious that our lives do not measure up to what we would want them to be and so then

God provided Moses with three signs that he might be able to convince the skeptical Israelites one was a staff that would turn into a snake when thrown to the ground the second was his hand would become leprous when put inside his cloak and the third was that water from the Nile would turn into blood when poured on dry land and this remarkable gift of God to Moses should have been enough to melt his doubts but Moses had another excuse excuse number four his inability to speak eloquently this was Moses last bastion to hide behind and it's usually ours too when we're encouraged to witness when we're encouraged to share our faith we insist that we are not eloquent enough we can't easily talk to others and God's answer to the reluctant

Moses was I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak can we believe that even the words that we need to say at any particular time will be given to us if we operate in faith and commitment to our Lord but in reality we only express a fraction of the faith that God has given us the heart of the matter for Moses and for us is that most of us do not aim very high in matters of faith we are content to settle for very little and then we become onlookers to God's activity in history we become spectators and recipients we are not actors or participants and

[21:47] I think we have forgotten the words of Jesus some of the most amazing words in the Bible very truly I tell you the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and in fact will do greater works than these because I go to the Father that comes from John chapter 14 verse 12 and after Moses had given all his excuses to God and God had responded to them he finally came out with the truth I don't want to go send someone else and now this refusal made God angry still he

wouldn't let Moses off the hook he gave him a spokesman his brother Aaron Moses would be the leader of the

Israelites and God would still speak directly to him and teach him what he should do but there would be a mediator between him and the people he would speak to Aaron God's word and Aaron in turn would share it with the people and there's something great about that God always gives us what we need to do his work but there is something sad about it too because of his stubborn reluctance Moses forfeited the privilege of being the spokesman of God before the people Moses was audibly and visibly called into God's service and invested with authority despite the shock to his system he must have been a blessed thing to speak face to face with

God and then to go straight into the work in which he had been called but is our call any less divine is there not work for every one of us work not unlike that of which Moses had been called the state of the world is extremely sad people today are oppressed oppressed they are oppressed as the Israelites were they are slaves to the things of this world and has not God caught your attention called you by name and said I have seen the affliction of my people I have heard they cry I know their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them and to bring them up out of that land and has not

God said to you come I will send you I will send you that you may bring forth my people I have come down I will send you God wants his people freed from their slavery but you say who am I that I should go but what shall I say but they will not believe me but I am not eloquent and there is a point where we too can blow it there is a danger in being too humble minded we must beware for there is a hidden line over which self distrust may not pass because then it becomes unbelief there is a hidden line over which self distrust may not pass because then it becomes unbelief self consciousness is the ruin of many calls of God if we look to ourselves we will be continually discouraged robbed of the purpose that God has for us we are allowed to cherish our weakness only because through it we will experience the all sufficiency of God we will experience his love flowing through us and we will experience

God with us but God wants to bring his people safely home he has called for your help he has called for your labors he wants to express his love through you it was said that between the hours of ten and one for many nights a woman might be seen making her way through the streets of St. [27 : 36] Kilda a year earlier her daughter had left home the mother had learned that her daughter might be seen every night in that part of the city and after many many nights of watching and waiting she was about to despair when she saw a figure that closely resembled that of her daughter and she eagerly approached and was about to wrap her arms around her when the light from the shop window showed that it was not her child and in pain and grief she called out oh you are not her I was looking for my daughter but no you are not my child the poor startled girl burst into tears and said I have no mother

I wish I had I wish someone would look for me she she was saying that she wished someone cared cared for her she wished someone loved her she wished someone loved her enough to go looking for her there are a multitude of lost and hurting people all around us oppressed people God has heard their cries he knows their suffering he has come down to deliver them they are people who are ready to hear that God cares for them ready to hear that he loves them they are people who want someone to care enough to go and look for them this little poem says a lot to me one day I rang a doorbell in a casual sort of way it was not a formal visit and there wasn't much to say I don't remember what I said it matters not I guess I found a heart in hunger and a soul in deep distress she said I came from heaven and I often wondered why she said I come to see her where no other help was nigh it meant so little to me to knock on a neighbor's door but it meant heaven to her and God's presence forever more God hears hears his people's cries he knows they suffering and we have brothers and sisters lost out there wishing someone would come and look for them and God is trusting you to do your part he's saying to you I have come down I will send you bring my people safely home come I will send you me come to get kids done end I ■■■■■000 e me