



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 30, 2020

I AM, Here I am

by Garland F. Pierce

Exodus 3:1-15

3:1 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

3:2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.

3:3 Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up."

3:4 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."

3:5 Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

3:6 He said further, "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.

3:7 Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings,

3:8 and I have come down to deliver them from 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 country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

3:9 The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress

them.

3:10 So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

3:11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

3:12 He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

3:13 But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"

3:14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

3:15 God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

At the time of this writing, fires sweep through California in the USA, while in parts of Africa and other places, persons travel great distances in order to collect wood to build fires for the daily activities of life like cooking. Many are bombarded with fiery political speeches and debate crowding the airwaves and social media. Fire demands our attention.

During the course of a regular day for a shepherd, Moses is captivated by a bush in flames but not consumed. He hears the voice of God calling him to do something about the suffering of God's people. Moses answers, "Here I am." When God calls, "Here I am" is always an appropriate response. His father-in-law is the priest; Moses is a layman, carrying out his normal routine as a shepherd to his father-in-law's flock. He is a long way from Pharaoh's palace. So he asks, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" After being assured that God will be with him in this struggle for freedom, Moses asks, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" At some point in our lives, when we are called out of the ordinary and called to do something extraordinary for God, we will ask similar questions, "Who am I for such a task, at such a time, in such a way?" and "What shall I tell the people about this calling God?" Be assured that I AM sees and hears the suffering of those who are oppressed. Be assured that I AM cares. Be assured that I AM will be with you every step of the journey to freedom.

At this writing, Mr. Jacob Blake III, the grandson of an AME minister lays handcuffed to a hospital bed, paralyzed after being shot in the back multiple times by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in a car filled with his family including three children, ages 3, 7, and 8. Don't

be surprised if as you go along your ordinary day carrying out your ordinary tasks, you see a “burning bush” and hear I AM say to you, “I have observed the misery of my people. I will send you to lead them on the journey of freedom.” It will not matter whether you are prince, priest, or keeping the flock of another. Will you say, “Here I am?”

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)— Have you had a “burning bush” experience? How did you know that it was God whom you were encountering?

PRAY:

God of fire,
You are a force beyond human understanding,
with the power
to sear through the veins of creation
with passion and vigor,
or to extinguish life in consuming flame.
Your presence is dangerous
for there is no predicting
where you might burn,
and yet comforting
for the light and warmth
offer an invitation to draw closer.

Redeeming God,
out of the flames of your creation,
your voice calls,
marking us as your own.
Yet there are times
when we choose to ignore your voice,
and listen instead to our own needs and desires
and those that challenge our faith
from within the world.
Forgive us for those times;
when we have ignored the needs of others;
when we have failed to place our feet upon your path;
when we allow the earthly voice to distract us from your call.

Loving Lord,
in your forgiveness
you offer again your invitation
to know your love,
to be loved,
and to respond to your call.

In hearing your voice
may we find our place
within your creation.
AMEN.

—written by Rev. MaryAnn R. Rennie

adapted from <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/08/approach-confession-exodus-3-1-15.html>

ACT:

1. Whose suffering have you observed? How will you answer God’s call for relief and freedom through action (write, call, speak up, educate, protest)? Make a plan. For those US citizens, here are some practical actions to take: Participate in the current democratic processes (voter registration, voting, completing the 2020 census and encouraging others to do so—See: <http://www.amev-alert.org> and <https://2020census.gov>.) For everyone, practice social distancing as much as possible, wash your hands often, and wear face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Song:

Guide My Feet
AMEC Hymnal, #386

1. Guide my feet while I run this race,
Guide my feet while I run this race,
Guide my feet while I run this race, for I don’t want to run this race in vain!
2. Hold my hand while I run this race,
Hold my hand while I run this race,
Hold my hand while I run this race, for I don’t want to run this race in vain!
3. Stand by me while I run this race,
Stand by me while I run this race,
Stand by me while I run this race, for I don’t want to run this race in vain!

4. I'm your child while I run this race,
I'm your child while I run this race,
I'm your child while I run this race, for I don't want to run this race in vain!
5. Search my heart while I run this race,
Search my heart while I run this race,
Search my heart while I run this race, for I don't want to run this race in vain!
6. Guide my feet while I run this race,
Guide my feet while I run this race,
Guide my feet while I run this race, for I don't want to run this race in vain!

Alternative Song: *Here I Am* by Marvin Sapp, <https://youtu.be/wXX8Be4VQy4>

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.