

MAY 19 2024 FPCPORTHURON PASTOR ROXIE, THE FIRE OF GOD Scripture: Exodus 3: 1-12; Acts 2: 1-13; (Helpful Scripture to Read: Exodus Chapters 1-12; Acts Chapter 1-3)

INTRODUCTION

Many of you know we are in a Preaching Series called: “Old Stories; New Lessons.” We have been looking at stories from the Old Testament that can teach us something about our life and faith. We have already talked about Abraham and Sarah, called by God to be the father and mother, not only of the Christian faith but also of the Jewish and the Muslim faith. If that doesn’t make your head spin, then last week, our children presented on Mother’s Day, the stories of many mothers in the Old Testament—stories of the family lines that come down to King David and ultimately to Jesus. fascinating stories of faith—the epitome of family joy, mixed with conflict.

MOSES

Today our Old Story (in the Old Testament) is about Moses—But not only Moses but also about his sister Miriam and his brother Aaron—all assisting Moses to accomplish the call and purposes of God. Your head might really be spinning, now. I will try to simplify all of this so that we can apply it to our daily lives—and the living out of our faith in Jesus Christ in 2024.

PENTECOST

However, to be respectful of the Holy Days that we celebrate as the Church—I have added Peter and Jesus’ Disciples into the mix of our conversation today—Because today is Pentecost—Sometimes referred to as the Birthday of the Church—but historically, Pentecost was the Jewish celebration of Shavuot which was primarily a thanksgiving celebration and a remembrance of God giving the 10 Commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai, God’s Mountain, in the desert. Remember that Jesus and His disciples are first and foremost Jewish. Before Jesus ascends into heaven, He promises the disciples that they will receive the Holy Spirit—as an advocate and power in their lives to accomplish God’s purposes. The baptism of the Holy Spirit on those early disciples happens on Pentecost—And it is celebrated by we Christians, 50 days after Easter and the resurrection of our Lord.

Pentecost becomes the day that the Holy Spirit comes upon Jesus’ Disciples—Thus, they can now share in different languages, the good news of Jesus Christ’s life, death and resurrection and the promise of eternal life—abundant life here on this earth, and everlasting life beyond the here and now.

COMPARISONS—PARALLELS

Believe it or not, as God would have it, there are parallels between Moses and Peter in these two events from which we can learn. Both Moses and Peter are called by God

to lead “the people” into new horizons of faith. New adventures where God will guide them, where God’s purposes and glory is preeminent. Both Moses and Peter are called by God to lead!

God says to Moses (Old Testament):

“Now, go, I am sending you to the Egyptian Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites slaves out of Egypt. But Moses says to God: “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the people out?” God says: “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

God in Jesus Christ, says to Peter (New Testament) (and the other disciples):

“Who do you say that I am?” And Peter speaks up: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus exclaims, Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah (his original name). My father in heaven has revealed this to you. **You are Peter (which means Rock) and on this “Rock” I will build my church.**

Moses goes to Egypt and stands before the Pharaoh, demanding, “Let my people go.” The plagues come for the Egyptians before finally the Pharaoh lets the people go. And Moses leads out of Egypt, 600,000 men, not counting the women and children.

Peter tells those gathered on that day of Pentecost that God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah The people ask: “What shall we do?” Peter boldly says: “Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” Many welcomed Peter’s message and on that day, **3000 persons were added to their number.** They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. **The first day of the Church.**

FOOTNOTE TO THEIR LEADERSHIP Just a footnote to their leadership.

Moses—did not do this alone. Aaron—his older brother was there to speak for Moses, many times.

Miriam—his older sister was there to encourage and sing when things went well.

Peter is not alone. The other 11 (Matthias replaced Judas—the betrayer) disciples had also received the Holy Spirit and all of them took on the mantle of leadership in the early church. In our faithful deeds, done for the glory of God, God, in Jesus Christ, it is always done together—a Team Effort—that is true for us in 2024. **I may be the pastor—but this is not my ministry-it is our ministry as the church.**

FIRE

Another connection between Moses leading the Israelite people out of Egypt and Peter leading the early church—**There is Fire in both events—and uncharted territory--Both Moses and Peter subsequently become, as we would say, “on fire” for the Lord. In each instance—the fire represents the Presence of God.** (that is why some of you are wearing red today—Hopefully as an indication that you are also “on fire for the Lord”)

Listen again to what is says in Scripture: Moses goes to Horeb, the mountain of God. (far side of the desert) and the angel of the Lord appears to him, in flames of fire from within a bush, Moses sees, even with the flames, the bush does not burn up. Curiosity gets the best of him. He goes closer to the fire But God speaks out of the flames: **“Come no closer. You are standing on Holy Ground.”** And then it is, that God explains why Moses needs to go back to Egypt--

God recognizes the suffering of the Israelites slaves and God’s plan is to rescue them, through the leadership of Moses.

Now I have a joke for you about Moses. One time **Former President George W. Bush** was walking through an airport, when he saw an old man with white hair, a long white beard, wearing a long white robe and holding a staff. **He walks up to the man, who was staring at the ceiling, and says: "Excuse me sir, aren't you Moses?"** The man does not answer. Again, George W. asked, a bit louder, "Sir, aren't you Moses?" Again, the old man just kept looking up. George W. tries one more time, with no response. Then George W. Bush’s aide gets involved. with the aides’ help, the man responds to the aide: **“Yes, I am Moses. But the last time I spoke to a Bush, I had to speak in public, I was chased by an Egyptian army, And I spent 40 years in the wilderness.” No, I don’t speak to Bushes.**

Well, even though he spent 40 years in the wilderness with the Israelites, Moses never lost **his trust in God** and never lost **his fire for the Lord. (A good lesson for all of us).** **(There is a Footnote: another fire—flame in Moses’ Exodus story from Egypt.** There was a fiery cloud—the Presence of God-- that led the People of God out of Egypt, at night, when they were afraid, scared, hungry—The fiery cloud provided light for the Israelites to follow where God would lead, Even at night—in the darkness, even as they were being chased by the Egyptian army.

Lesson to be learned. Even when there is darkness, fear, lack of necessities, God wants to shine His light—His fire into our lives. Some people call this: “God Moments” –Often that bit of fiery flame comes to us from other people. We have to open our eyes to God’s presence. And trust, like Moses did, that God knows where we need to go. God knows what is in our future. And God’s Holy Flame provides the light. Believe me, It’s hard to walk life’s path without the flickering of God’s flame.

Fire at Pentecost with the Disciple Peter. Along with the other disciples, Disciple Peter experienced the fire of God, landing on each of them. Listen, for a moment, to the atmosphere around this scene: “Suddenly a sound like the blowing of violent wind comes from heaven and fills the whole house where the disciples are sitting. They see what seems to be tongues of fire, resting on each of them.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit (Remember: God—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—Trinity—God), And the disciples begin to speak in other languages as the Spirit enables them. Peter and the other disciples are “on fire” for the Lord, through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Their whole purpose—Just like our whole purpose—Is to be powered by the Holy Spirit In fulfilling the Great Commission which spoke to them and to us: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded and lo, I am with you always.”—That is done—through the power of the Holy Spirit that is available to **all of us—As it was to Moses—And to Peter—To do great things for God.**

FINAL COMPARISON BETWEEN MOSES AND PETER AND US—

They **trusted God** to lead the way. Can we trust God to lead the way for our personal and communal life together? And **God trusted both men** (with all their faults, failings and inexperience). God trusted them to carry out God’s will and purposes in their world. I believe **God of the universe, also trusts us** to share the Good News of God’s love and forgiveness seen in Jesus Christ.

God trusts us to be faithful to Him, relying on His powerful Holy Spirit fire to give us strength and energy to fulfill to work God has set before us. Are there going to be anxious moments as there were for Moses and Peter.— Absolutely— Don’t think that there was no squabbling in the wilderness with the people of God; Don’t think that there were no problems or divisions in the early church. No Question! in both personal and church life, there will be anxious moments; there will be scary times; there will be confusion; there will be doubts as to whether we can do or say what God is encouraging us to do and say; there will be tough God assignments, for the welfare of God’s world, and God’s love for all humanity.

But there is no doubt in my mind, that there will be the flame of God, alight in our lives, There will be a blaze in our ministry where the bush seems to be burning but really, if we look closely, the miracles of God are at work. And in it all, People **will** come to God, confessing Jesus Christ, wanting to love God and love others, And the rest is history—God is forever praised, and we are forever blessed.