

First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham
“The Mighty Acts of God: Who Me? No us.”
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October 1, 2017

Exodus 3:1-14

It was one of those creepy moments you never forget. I was a senior in college and I had gone out to visit a friend of mine and her husband who lived in Salt Lake City. As a good Mormon she wanted me to visit the Temple Visitor Center. I was part of a group of about twenty or thirty people and we had a wonderful guide. She took us through the center and gave us a great look at Mormon history and beliefs. As we were finishing and the crowd was breaking up, the guide walked over to me, stuck her finger in my chest and said, “God has something special for you to do.” Then she walked away. My first inner response was, “Who me?” And it was, who me, because not only were God and I not in regular communication but I barely believed in God at all. So why would this God have something special for me to do?

I have occasionally wondered if this is the way that Moses must have felt on the day he encountered God at the physics defying burning bush. Most of us probably know the story but let’s just do a quick recap. Moses is hanging out with his sheep. As per usual, nothing much is happening. Suddenly he sees a bush that is on fire but is not being consumed. Thinking that this is an interesting sight, he saunters over to check it out. As he does, a voice speaks to him and calls his name. The voice warns Moses that he is only holy ground and so he ought to take off his shoes. The voice goes on to tell Moses that the speaker is none other than the God of his ancestors. This is enough to frighten Moses. But where it seems to get a bit creepy for him is when this God, whom Moses did not know, essentially says, “I have something special for you to do. I want you to go and set my people free.” This statement is enough to get Moses to respond as I did. Who me? Are you talking to me?

This response from Moses makes more sense than most of us might imagine. If you look at his resume he hardly seems like the right guy for the job. Sure, he is all about justice as we discussed two weeks ago. But he is a wanted man in Egypt. He has no followers. He has no power. He has a family. He has a good job and makes a comfortable living. He is in fact a bit confused as to whether he is an Egyptian or a Hebrew. You put these things together and his response of, “who me?”, certainly seems like the right one.

I would guess that at one time or another in all our lives, someone has come to us and told us that they have something special for us to do. And these requests are generally divided into two categories. The first category includes those special things that we had hoped someone would ask us to do. Maybe it is when our teacher comes up to us and says, I have something

special for you to do, can you lead the class to lunch today. Or maybe it is doing the announcements. As we grow older it might be being asked to be a starter on a sports team, or the lead in a play, or to move up a chair in the band. Once we hit the working world we hope that our bosses or HR will come to us and say, we have something special for you to do, we want you to take this promotion and this new task. We love these kinds of special things that people ask us to do.

The other kind of, I have something special for you to do offers are those that come from God. And often these are not the kind of I have something special for you to do things, to which our usual response is, who me? Are you talking to me? When we get these requests, such as, “I want you to believe in and follow me.” “I want you to forgive those people who hurt you.” I want you to take some of your hard-earned money and give it to a ministry that helps the hungry or might impact those in Puerto Rico. I want you to show compassion for those people you have always looked down upon.” It is these kinds of, I have something special for you to do, requests that catch us off guard and become a bit creepy because they are often out of the normal scope of personal operations and we are not sure that we can do them. Like Moses, we think that these are things for which someone else might be better suited. And it is at those moments that our morning’s story offers us a gift. And that gift is that God stops Moses and says, “It’s not, who me? It’s us.”

God’s response to Moses is not to give him some sort of pregame pep-talk, but it is to say very simply, “I will be with you.” The me, has turned into an us. Moses learns that this God who hears the cries of God’s children, is not a God who sends people out on solo-heroic quests. This is the God who will walk with Moses and then with the Hebrew people through thick and thin, good times and bad. And this is what you and I can count on when we feel God telling us that God has something special for us to do. Whether it is forgiving, serving, sacrificing or praying, we will not do it alone. God, through the presence of the Spirit, will be in our midst. It will be an “us” and not a “me.”

The challenge for us then is to ask ourselves, what is that special thing that God wants us to do, and then to step out in faith and do it, believing that it is us who do it, and not me alone.