

✧ Jesu juva ✧

THE INSISTENT SAVIOR

Psalm 103, Exodus 3:1-17

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Tonight we will look at another of the theophanies of the Old Testament. A theophany, you will recall, is an event in which God reveals Himself in some way to people or even to a single person as is the case tonight. For tonight we have heard of one of the most famous theophanies in the Old Testament, the appearance of God to Moses in the burning bush.

“Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, ‘I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.’” And after He does turn aside, the



Angel of the Lord speaks to Him and says He will send Moses into Egypt to save the Israelites. Moses protests, of course, that he is not fit to be a prophet. “Who am I that I should go?” he asks. And later, after the portion of this account that was already read, he protests that perhaps the Israelites will not listen to him or follow him. And then later he argues that he is not eloquent and can’t do the job because he is “slow of speech”. And finally he begs God to just send someone else instead. Moses was not very eager to be God’s prophet, or to save God’s people.

But the Angel of the Lord was eager and was insistent that His people be saved. We usually look at this story with Moses as the main figure, thinking what an experience Moses had there! What a challenge is laid before him! What a great man he was and what great faith he had to carry it out! But the main figure in this story is not Moses, but the Angel of the Lord, who is none other than the Son of God, the pre-incarnate Christ. As it says in the text: “the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush.” And then, “God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, ‘Moses, Moses’...” The Angel is the Son of God, who is God.

And where Moses is reluctant to go and save, the Son of God insists not only that Moses go, but that He (God) will save His people. Our Psalm, which looks back on this event, captures this beautifully. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's... He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy." The whole Psalm is a remembrance of the mercy and grace and forgiveness the Lord provides for His people and provided for the Israelites when He sent Moses into Egypt and brought them out of their bondage to Pharaoh. Though Moses did not want to go, the Lord was insistent that Moses did go and that he become a savior to the people, through whom the Lord worked his salvation of them by bringing them out.

After the reading tonight we spoke the opening words of the book of Hebrews: "In many and various ways God spoke to His people of old by the prophets. But now in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son." Now the Son of God is so insistent that His people be saved that He has not sent another prophet, but has come down Himself, sent by His Father, to save us. Where Moses put forth every excuse he could think of for why God should send someone else, the Son eagerly obeys the will of His Father. As one of Luther's great hymns puts it:

"The Son obeyed the Father's will
Was born of Virgin mother
And God's good pleasure to fulfill
He came to be my Brother
His royal pow'r disguised He bore
A servant's form, like mine, He wore
To lead the devil captive."

And even now, He who came down so long ago to free us from our captivity and to make the devil captive, is eager to save and insists upon doing it. And so He calls to you, not from the midst of a burning bush, but from His holy Scriptures and from the preaching of them, to repent and to believe, and to follow Him out of bondage by receiving His grace and forgiveness. For as we chanted tonight in the Psalm: "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us..." Thanks be to Him who has revealed Himself in flesh like our own to rescue us, who was insistent upon our salvation and has won it and bestowed it. Amen.

✠ Soli Deo gloria ✠