

## **“God’s Merciful and Guiding Hand In Your Life” Lent 3**

1) Exodus 3:1-8, 10-15

2) March 24, 2019

May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance. 2 Thessalonians 3:5

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Mark Waddell was a Navy SEAL. And he was really good at his job. But towards the end of his career, he was involved in the worst disaster in SEAL history. A helicopter carrying 16 soldiers was shot down. Everyone died. He was the one that had to sift through the wreckage, identify the bodies, inform their loved ones that they would not be returning from war. He recalled, “One of the men’s wives just ran away from me, and kept running down the street.” That’s when Mark lost it...when he realized he had no idea where he was in life anymore. He wondered how he could hold it together anymore. Mark suffers from PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, which affects one out of every five soldiers returning from battle.

Can you imagine what it would have been like to be in Mark Waddell’s shoes? I believe he shared his story on 60 minutes. You may or may not be struggling with PTSD. But many struggle with direction in life. You ask yourself questions like, “What am I doing? Where am I going in life?” We do this at an extreme moment of crisis. Perhaps it happens at the deathbed of a loved one; or in the midst of a career change. If you ever feel that way, you’re not alone. Moses was feeling that way too.

We remember Moses’ life – he led God’s people the Israelites through the wilderness and up to the Promised Land. He climbed Mt Sinai to receive the 10 commandments; or was God’s chosen leader, provided water from a rock or how he parted the Red Sea.

Did you know that all those things in Moses’ life happened after Moses was 80 years old – the time here in our lesson where God called Moses into action? We don’t often think that way b/c that would be considered well into retirement.

As our lesson tells us –

**Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.**

What in the world was Moses doing as a shepherd tending to the flock at the age of 80? Well, Moses' mother was concerned that Pharaoh had it out for the Israelites b/c they were growing into too large a nation and too difficult to keep under control of servitude as their slaves. Pharaoh decided to kill all the baby boys to take care of the Israelite problem. So, Moses' mother put her baby boy into a papyrus basket and sent him down the Nile river. Pharaoh's daughter pulled him out and raised him as her own.

When Moses was 40, he realized that his people were being mistreated and decided to take matters into his own hands. He killed an Egyptian; the Israelites complained; Pharaoh found out about it; and Moses decided to run away.

Now, we find him an 80 year old man in the field, tending the flock. Imagine you come across a burning bush – an amazing sight of this bush burning, yet not burning up. So he decided to go check it out. After all, wouldn't you? I mean, it's a burning bush, but it's not being consumed!

Then God called to Moses, asked him to take off his sandals and not come any closer. He gave Moses a command to lead God's people out of Egypt.

How would Moses respond?

**<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”**

This is Moses telling God – I think you've got the wrong guy. If you don't remember, I ran away 40 years ago. Yet, here's God, reaching out to Moses – God telling Moses – I still have a plan for you in my kingdom.

Have you ever asked that of yourself? Asking yourself about the direction your life is taking – “Where am I going?” Maybe you think about the past. Maybe you're running away from a problem.

In Moses' case, God already had a plan.

**<sup>5</sup> “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”**  
God knew all about Moses' past; all of his failures and mistakes;

God knew that Moses was not holy, and all his problems and how he ran away; and yet, wanted to use him anyway.

God knows all about us, too. He knows our past – our history and mistakes. He knows how we try to run away from our problems.

**<sup>10</sup> So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”**

God wants us to remember that he has a plan for us. Even in the midst of our failures and mistakes. When we wonder if God could ever forgive us; when we wonder about our direction in life; God wants us to remember that we have great value in our lives.

Even after God gave him that encouragement, Moses wondered how he was going to convince the people that he was the one to lead them.

**<sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.**

**14 – I AM has sent me to you.’ ”**

We hear God’s encouragement to us in Jesus in these words. Jesus is the great I AM. Jesus said, “I am...the bread of life...the water that will quench your spiritual thirst...the resurrection and the life.” Jesus is the answer and every solution...whenever we try to run away or hide from our problems.

During the season of Lent we see Jesus for who he is and what he came to do for us. He went to the cross and took away our every sin, our past mistakes and failures. Jesus lived the perfect life in our place. His righteousness was credited to our account. Three days later, Jesus rose from the grave so that we might spend eternity with him forever in heaven.

Do you see God’s mercy and guiding hand in your life? It took Moses awhile to see it and identify it. He was hesitant at first and had a hard time taking God at his word. And think of all the great heroes of faith and God’s mercy for them in their lives – Adam and Eve, King David, and countless others who failed in great ways, yet God still had great plans for them in their life.

Let's continue to look at God's guiding and merciful hand in our lives. We find his mercy in the cross – where Jesus, the great I Am, gives us all the guidance and direction we need in life. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.<sup>2</sup> There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.<sup>3</sup> So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

<sup>4</sup> When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

<sup>5</sup> "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup> Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering." <sup>8</sup> So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

<sup>10</sup> So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

<sup>12</sup> And God said, "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."

**<sup>13</sup> Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”**

**<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ”**

**<sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.**