

If a tree falls in a forest, and no one was there – did it make a sound?

It's an old philosophical question, but here's a new twist:

If Moses had not shown up at the burning bush, would the ground still have been holy?

I bring up the question of Moses to call our minds to how God works when God wants our attention.

There are 6 things God does:

1. God gives a **sign, something remarkable,**
2. **draws** us to it,
3. **speaks** to us,
4. **transforms** us, makes us something we were not before,
5. gives us our **marching orders,**
6. and then **sends us out** to carry out our mission.

We can find these 6 elements in the Creation story in Genesis 1-3, in the story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many others.

But today, let's turn to Exodus 3, where the story of Moses and the burning bush is found,

For here we discover amazing parallels to what Jesus is praying in John 17.

God appeared wondrously in a burning bush and drew Moses to see the miracle.

God told him to take off his shoes, for the ground is holy.

Then God transformed him by giving Moses his divine identity

– I am the God of your fathers,

the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

And Moses was afraid – who could stand before the awful presence of Almighty God?!

Fear is often the beginning of transformation.

Then came God's purpose – *I will deliver my people from oppression in Egypt and give them a prosperous land.*

And You, Moses, will lead them out.

As confirmation of authority, God gave Moses his most holy name: Yahweh – I AM THAT I AM.

Being given the Most Holy Name of God transformed Moses from a simple laborer – and murderer – into a man beloved by God, fit for God's work and authorized for that work.

When you go to my people, tell them I AM, the God of your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has sent you to deliver them from their oppressors and lead them out.

And so he did.

...

Now, fast forward about 1500 years, and consider a **remarkable sign** – A young girl named Mary gives birth to a baby conceived by the Holy Spirit of YAHWEH, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David.

His name – given by God -- is Jesus – for he will save God’s people from their sins.

Mary and Joseph were afraid, Shepherds were afraid,
and God said “Fear not”

This is my Son – Listen to him.

1. **Divine signs** – a burning bush and baby God
2. Divine name
 - a. – YAHWEH, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus –
 - b. and Jesus, Son of the Father with the Holy Spirit.
3. **Divine Power & Authority – whoever is given God’s name also is given God’s power and authority**
4. Divine **purpose** – to deliver people in bondage to sin who cannot free themselves
 - a. – through Moses, once in time and space
 - b. and through Jesus, once into eternity.

Now we can see the significance as Jesus prays:

“Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Everything that God set in motion beginning with Adam and Eve, Abraham and Moses is now being fulfilled in Jesus.

- All deliverance,
- all promise,
- all hope,
- all redemption,
- all holiness,
- all life is accomplished in Jesus,
 - given by Jesus,
 - and inextricably united with Jesus.

...

Ok, but so what? What does that have to do with us on May 13, 2018?

First, Jesus is not praying for himself – he is praying for us.

He is praying for God the Father

to carry on making the Divine Purpose come to pass

in and among us.

The Divine Purpose: to deliver people in bondage to sin who cannot free themselves

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Sanctify – to make holy – to use for Divine Purpose

Sanctification is not perfection. It is not spiritual superiority or purity.

To be sanctified is to be put to use by God

for the sake of fulfilling God's purpose of saving all people from sin, death, and evil.

- Moses was sanctified,
- David was sanctified,
- Mary and Joseph were sanctified,
- Jesus was sanctified, and now the disciples are being sanctified.

And like Jesus, they are sanctified through blood – **through death itself** – so **that life might be taken up anew.**

As Jesus says in Mark: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it...."

In this new life – given to us in Holy Baptism – God puts us to use to do his saving will here where we live.

To be sanctified requires no special education, wealth, desire, or aptitude.

It is simply your open heart that is restless to see others in need of the love of Jesus and whispering to your soul

– God loves these sinners and wants to save them. Show me what to do, Lord.

Such a transformed, sanctified heart sees litter on the streets, picks it up and throws it away

knowing that God creates all things and loves everything he creates.

To be sanctified is to be drawn to the signs God gives us –

- baptism,
- Communion,
- worship,
- God's Word
- and to be transformed by God's grace and forgiveness
- and eager to receive our commission.

Go and make disciples....

And finally – with one purpose and one faith,

- **to obey our Lord and Savior.**
 - to Go into the world and make Jesus known to people.

Jesus, who is risen from the dead and makes everything new.

Let's listen again to Jesus praying:

But now I am coming to you, Holy Father, and I speak these things in the world so that my disciples may have my joy made complete in themselves.

- The joy of loving and being loved,
- the joy of eternal life,
- the joy of knowing God's Spirit to be pulsing through the body

The joy of being so connected with Jesus that we cannot imagine ourselves apart from him

The joy of being swept off our feet into the whirlwind of Divine purpose that we cannot help but carry it out.

That's what Jesus wants for us.

That's what Jesus lived and died to give us.

That's why Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to the Father

That's what Jesus dwells in us to do.

People of God – there is no reason for us to believe that Jesus' prayer is not being answered this very moment

– in your heart and in mine.

And that prayer

– that sanctifying transformation of our lives that makes us useful to God

– continues as we leave this place to enter the mission field.

For Jesus is the Holy Name of God,

- the Saving Purpose of God,
- the Divine Way, Truth, and Life,
- and the Victor over sin and death.

And nothing can stop him from fulfilling God's purpose to save the cosmos.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

A song for you: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YveVos-91s>

