

"I AM Sent Me To You"
Exodus 3:14-15

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho

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Dear Children of Israel ... that is, Children of the Lord's Church,

One day, as Moses the shepherd of sheep was about his vocation, he beholds a great sight - a flame of fire in the midst of a mountain shrub. Naturally curious, he determines, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." The Angel of the Lord, Who is the Lord, Who is God, calls out to him, "Moses, Moses!" He replies, "Here I am." The Lord God said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land. ... Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

Moses is called to retrieve God's flock held hostage and in bondage south of the Red Sea. He is being sent from one God (the Lord) to lead the Hebrew people away from another god (Pharaoh). "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" The Lord declares, "I will certainly be with you." Moses then asks a question that, to us in our day and age, may at first seem strange. For Moses and the children of Israel, in their time and place, it was a question which answer was of utmost importance. "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"

The answer to that question is the most important in the history of all creation and the most comforting to the children of God. Please listen to our text for this morning, Exodus 3:14-15, under the theme ...

... I AM Has Sent Me To You

And God said to Moses, "I AM Who I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you." Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The Lord 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, and this is My memorial to all generations.

Thus far the Word of the Lord our God.

"Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me

to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" There were many gods and Moses, by virtue of his presence and upbringing in Pharaoh's courts, was aware of many of them. Throughout Egypt's history there have been many gods from the well known Osiris and Isis, the sun-gods Ra and Horus, the river gods and the legions of other lesser known gods. Moses' father-in-law, a man named Jethro was a priest of Midian and no doubt had their gods. In addition, there were the regional gods, the household deities and the personal gods of stone and wood that were carried about by individuals. "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"

Of course, that is foreign to us since we don't worship carved idols of wood and stone, and that such graven images are not really gods. We have gotten far beyond that sort of old-time idolatry. We're much more sophisticated, carving out images in the securities exchange, bowing down to the idolness of retirement, gazing into the peep-stone of tomorrow's worry, kowtowing to the swelling pride of education, seeking the increasing status of self in one's field, or basking, if only for the night in the deity of drugs, with the goddess of sex, under the deceptive fetish of coveting or mesmerized by the graving image in the mirror. Take a closer look at yourself and others in this world of many gods. There is suffering because of these fetters. The love of money enslaves with the ever-increasing shackles of supply and demand. Some serve the god whose pull is that of power and position -- of controlling, dictating and forcing others to submit to personal authority. The abuse of alcohol is consuming. Lives become burdened with the weight of gods created in our own image and according to our likenesses. "Oh dear God, I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Dear God, is there any good word for such people?" Indeed, when I come to the congregation and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"

And God said to Moses, "I AM Who I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you." This I AM is pronounced Jehovah or Yahweh or simply the Lord. His Name means "I exist" or "I be." Fine, but just who is this great I AM? He is the One Who said to Moses, "I have surely seen the oppression of My people. ... I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters." Here, dear people, is Jehovah, the God Who has certainly seen the suffering and bondage of His people ... from Eve as she beheld the lifeless body of her son Abel, whose blood cried out to God for vengeance, to the sights and sounds Hebrew people whose backs bore the scourging of Pharaoh's taskmasters, to seeing each of His children today who are weary and heavy-laden with burdens that stagger the soul and/or wrack the body, and whose cries reach the ears of God ... in other words, to you and I AM says "I have surely seen the oppression of My people."

Is there more? For surely we need more than having Jehovah having seen these burdensome things and heard their unending wailings. I have seen much suffering and affliction, and have heard the varied cries of grief, anguish, pain, tragedy and despair. You have too. But our seeing and our hearing does not change anything. Seeing is only seeing and hearing is only hearing. Is there more? And the Lord said, "... I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them."

Here, dear people, is Yahweh, the God Who knows ... not just intellectually knows but by experience ... knows the sufferings and sorrows, hurts and pain of His people. This I AM is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8). He comes to deliver His people and declares to them, "Truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM (John 8:58). He is Emmanuel, "God with us," and He has come down to deliver His people. This Jehovah is Jesus, the Word made flesh and dwelling among

us (John 1:14). This Angel of the Lord is the Manna from heaven Who has come down to deliver His people by suffering under the scourging whip, by being forced to bear a wooden cross- beam that would then bear Him at His crucifixion for your sins, and not for yours only, but also for the sins of the whole world of all times and generations. He has come into this world to be the Redeemer. This Good News goes forth so that those who are not His people might become His people, and thus He would be their Deliverer as well. And whoever eats this Manna from above, whoever believes in the Incarnate I AM, whoever eats this Bread will live forever (John 6:58).

Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.'" What a great comfort and blessing these words are for you. They may not seem it at first, but consider what our Redeemer said one day when He was questioned by the Sadducees, a religious group that did not believe that there was a Resurrection. Jesus took them right back to the burning bush with His reply, "Concerning the Resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I AM the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:31-32).

Abraham is not dead. He is alive and with the Lord God Almighty. Isaac is not dead. He died in faith and is alive in Christ. Jacob is with Jesus. Your believing grandfather, daughter, sister, infant, husband, wife, friend, neighbor, brother, uncle, and/or cousin who departed this life is not dead. These are very much alive and with the Lord for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. The Lord thus says to those whom He sends out to His people, "Thus you shall say to the children," "The Lord 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, and this is My memorial to all generations."

Jehovah appears to Moses out of the burning bush on Mount Horeb, calls the man to lead the people of God out of Egypt and says, "I will certainly be with you." The crucified and risen Jesus appears to His disciples, calls them to lead the great congregation and to proclaim the Good News to a world held hostage to the Pharaoh of Hell and says, "I am with you always to the end of the age." Today is no different as He says to pastors called to the task of proclaiming Law and Gospel, "I will certainly be with you," as well as to each one of you, "I am with you always."

Dear children of the Church, I AM has sent me to you with this message:

Jehovah sees your suffering.
The Lord hears your cry.
Yahweh knows your burdens.
Christ came to suffer, cry and bear your burdens.
Jesus is your Deliverer.
I AM is with certainly with you.
I AM is God's Name for all generations.
I AM is God's Name forever.
I AM is the God of the living. Amen.