

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

September 3, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Exodus 3: 1-15

Responsive Reading; Psalm 26: 1-8

Epistle Reading; Romans 12: 9-21

Gospel Reading; Mathew 16: 21-28

Sermon Title: I AM Has Sent Me

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; If your enemy is hungry, feed him: if your enemy is thirsty, give him a drink: for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.

I have a question for you.

Who is this Moses guy anyway? Is he some kind of super hero or seasoned general?

Heck no! This is a guy who was raised with a silver spoon in his mouth. He lived in a palace, ate the best food and had all the perks of Egyptian royalty. Then he went and lost it all by disregarding the protocol he was brought up with. He sided

with a worthless slave and murdered a respected enforcer of the master Egyptian race. He then ran away to Mexico, well actually Midian, to hide out doing the lowliest job known to man, a sheep herder.

This is where we meet Moses in our scripture lesson from the Old Testament. Moses sees a bush that is on fire but the fire is not hurting the integrity of the bush, He goes to check it out and the next thing he knows he is in a face to face discussion with God Himself.

God tells this self-professed loser that God is going to use him to save God's people in Egypt. In the next couple chapters Moses uses every excuse in the book, to show God that he, Moses, is not the right man for the job.

God is not having any of that whining and commissions him to do the job. What Moses did not realize is that his imperfections were the very reason God was going to use him. God knew that He would not get the credit if He used a super hero instead of a commoner to lead the Exodus. Moses was as common as it got.

When Moses asked what name should he give the listeners God said, "I AM WHO I AM". This would also be accurate if He said, "I AM BECAUSE I AM" or "I AM WHO I WILL BE". God is God and God is everything. There is no other God, and there is no other anything like what God is. With God the least can be the

greatest and the greatest is nothing. We are all in the same boat and we all have the same captain.

Now here comes the biggie. We, like Moses, are all commissioned to do a job for God. We are all sent by I AM.

If this scares you check out the rest of our scripture lessons.

Our lesson from Psalms says that we do not have to be perfect, we just need to try. We need to try to walk in integrity. We all need to trust the Lord. We all need to listen to God and try to have the heart of God to the best of our ability. We all need to avoid evildoers, wicked people, and hypocrites. We all need to go to church because “we love the habitation of His house” and not because someone told us we should go.

The passage from Romans does the opposite of the Ten Commandments, it does not tell us what we shouldn't do but what we should try to do. Hear this again.

“Let love be without hypocrisy, abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, (if it is possible), as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." And finally, do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

That heaping coals of fire sounds strange but think about it. If someone is rude or cruel to you and you react in kind, then you are validating their actions, but, if you respond with kindness and respect how can they react other than trying to eat their own words. COOL!

Now comes the Gospel. Jesus was sent by the I AM and Jesus was the I AM that sent His disciples and now sends all of us. Jesus takes His responsibility seriously and asks us to do likewise.

We are not sent to free the slaves but we are sent to do something for the great I AM. Maybe it is to be a friend to someone who needs it. Maybe it is to give someone a ride to a

doctor's appointment, or give a smile, or a hug, or an ear to let them vent. I don't know what your assignment is but I know it is from I AM just as it was for Moses and if God believes in you, who am I to doubt you. Put your sandals back on, take up your rod and go for it. God, the great I AM is with you. You can do it!

Do it for God and tell them I AM sent me.

Hallelujah and Amen!