**SERMON 1-26-2020**

**EXODUS 3:1-15 & 4:10-13**

It was a beautiful Sunday morning.

The parishioners had taken their seats, the choir were in their places.

The ushers were ready to help,

          and the Pastor was robed and waiting to begin the worship service.

The organist was playing the prelude.

Everything and everyone was ready.

But suddenly a late arriving member burst through the entrance doors.

He whispered loudly to the ushers and Pastor

          that the large bush on their front lawn was on fire.

They followed him outside, where indeed, their shrubbery was aflame.

By this time the parishioners realized what was wrong,

          and collected water in pots and pitchers and passed them

          down the line in a feeble attempt to put out the fire.

One of the ushers took out his cell phone and called 911.

He told the operator:

          "This is First Christian Church and we need a fire engine.

          The large bush on our lawn is on fire."

But there was only silence. There was no response from the operator.

“Are you still there?" he asked. "Are you sending the firemen?”

Finally, sounding very confused, the operator responded:

          "I don't understand sir. You are a church.

          You have a burning bush on your lawn.

“Yes!" the usher shouted, "that's what I already told you!”

"Well, aren't you supposed to talk to it, or listen to it, or something,

          instead of trying to put it out?"

Moses had a rough start in his life.

The Egyptians wanted him killed along with all the other Hebrew baby boys.

He floated down the river in a basket,

          until Pharaoh's daughter saw the basket and retrieved it.

His young life was good, he ate well, was educated, and protected.

But one day, when he grew to adulthood,

          he killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave.

He fled from Pharaoh and traveled to Midian.

He married a woman named Zipporah who bore him two sons.

He enjoyed his life in Midian, he was safe, and secure, and happy.

He loved his wife, and got along well with his father-in-law.

He had settled down.     He had a good life.

He enjoyed shepherding the sheep.

But, as things do, everything was about to change.

One day while leading the flock of sheep to good feeding grounds,

          Moses saw a bush which was burning without being consumed.

He approached the bush, and discovered it talked.

"Moses! Moses!" God called to him from within the bush.

And Moses said, "Here I am."

"Do not come any closer," God said.

“Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

Then God told Moses he was sending him to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

But there was one major problem.

Moses did not want to go back to Egypt.

He had left under a cloud of suspicion and failure.

The Egyptians wanted to kill him, and his own people resented him.

He was afraid.      He was uncomfortable.   He was unhappy.

He didn't want to go.

So he began to think up excuses:

          Who am I that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?

          What if they ask me who sent me?

          What if they will not listen to me?

          What if they do not believe me?

          I am not an eloquent speaker, I am slow of speech.

And finally, when all his other excuses failed, "Please, Lord. Send someone else."

Moses was seeking any excuse which would free him from this task.

He did not want to leave the good life he had.

There once was a tourist who visited the Grand Canyon.

He was having a great time viewing the sights,

          awed by the beauty and magnificence. .

But while he was exploring, he came too close to the edge of the Canyon.

He slipped, lost his footing, and plunged over the side,

          clawing and reaching in an effort to save himself.

As he fell into open space, he bumped into a scrubby bush

          and desperately grabbed it with both hands.

Shaking with terror, afraid the branch he clung to would break off,

          he called as loud as he could toward the edge of the canyon:

“Is there anyone up there?”

A calm, powerful voice came out of the sky, "Yes, there is."

The tourist pleaded, "Can you help me?"

The calm voice replied, "Since I am God Almighty, Yes, I probably can.

          What is your problem?"

"I fell off the cliff, and I am dangling in space, holding on to a bush

          which is about to come out by the roots. Please help me!"

The voice from above said, "I'll try. Do you believe?"

"Yes, yes, I believe," came the response.

The voice from above said, "Do you have faith?"

"Yes, yes, I have strong faith," came the reply.

The calm voice said, "Well, in that case,

          simply let go of the bush and everything will turn out fine."

There were several long moments of silence.

Then the tourist began yelling loudly: "Is there anyone else up there?"

We believe in God.

We trust God.

We want to obey God.

But sometimes the tasks God gives us seem too difficult, even impossible.

We want a more comfortable way out.

We know God. We believe in God. We trust God.

But sometimes when he gives us a job to do,

          we don't believe we can do it,

          we don't know how to do it,

          we believe there just has to be another way.

Or we want God to pick someone else for the task.

But it really comes down to: Can God really accomplish this task through me?

We don’t want to go back to Egypt.

We don't want to let go of the bush.

We want another way out.

It is hard to really trust God completely.

And God understands us.

He knows we worry about our failure to accomplish the tasks he gives us.

He knows we doubt ourselves,

          we think we do not have the skills, the courage, or the time.

When God calls us, He has a purpose for us.

No matter how inadequate we may feel,

          God wouldn't call us if we weren't capable of doing what He asks.

He will provide all that we need,

          we simply just need to be willing to be available.

Remember the young boy with a few fish and some bread.

Who would have thought it could feed thousands?

Jesus taught us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick,

          comfort the suffering, and God is always with us to help us.

God never expects us to accomplish his will all by ourselves.

We can always trust in His power, strength, and wisdom.

 Jesus said: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them

         in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

          and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

          And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

It is not so important who we are, or what we are capable of doing.

What is important is God is always with us, he never leaves us all alone.

The excuses are not so important:

          I can't.         I don't know how.         I am afraid I will fail.

          I am uncomfortable.        I really don't want to.

          Who am I?  What if?

          Please, Lord. Send someone else.

But if we trust God to make it work, we can discover great peace and joy,

          in what God accomplishes through us.

Remember what God did through Moses, Noah, David, Jonah, and so many others.

God has a big picture is mind.

And He invites us to be part of it.

AMEN