### Exodus 3:1-15

 1 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. 2 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. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

 4 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."

 5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 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.

 7 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. 8 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. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

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

 12 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 [[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+3:1-15#fen-NIV-1592a)] will worship God on this mountain."

 13 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?"

 14 God said to Moses, "I am who I am . [[b](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+3:1-15#fen-NIV-1594b)] This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

 15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, [[c](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+3:1-15#fen-NIV-1595c)] 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.

**Romans 12:9-21**

9Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; 10love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. 11Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. 13Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. 14Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” 20No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” 21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Matthew 16:21-28**

21From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” 23But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

24Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? 27“For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. 28Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

“Called to What?”

The Rev. Lisa J. Durkee

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Only for one year did I teach little children and I want to assure you that I am not going to give a quiz, though I do want to ask you some questions today. We heard today’s lesson from the Old Testament last week as well, because it is such a powerful passage that has me continuing to think about the fact that we are all on holy ground and that we are all called. And thinking about just how hard that is. I want to focus your attention on two elements of the scripture lessons for today, and they are in some manner puzzling, so stay focused. Essentially, all three texts are about the call to faith, and about identity, and though I could expound on each individually for a long time, I invite you to consider the way in which our story is a continuation of Moses’ story; the narrative of our lives as Christians continues the narrative of the early disciples and the apostle Paul. When we read the stories of our scripture, of the Bible, we are in a way reading the prologue to our lives, as well as a map and a guide to our lives as those called to love and serve the Lord God.

Do you know that we are standing on holy ground? We are standing on holy ground.

Moses was barefoot and afraid stood on ground that had to be pointed out to him as holy. I wonder if you ever ask yourselves as I do from time to time, where is our holy ground? It’s easy around here sometimes to think of the amazing, the stunningly beautiful natural wonders we’ve seen. I know that some of you feel as I do that as we ascend Blue Hill Mountain we are somehow climbing closer to God with each step, because of the beauty and because of the expanse of what we can see in the distance. That *must* be made by God, for all its beauty. Think of some of the amazing, beautiful natural wonders we have seen.In her book, *No Moment Too Small*, Norvene Vest extols the value of Benedictine spirituality in helping her to engender such a perspective on the world. I want to quote from her as she writes about Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine order of Catholic Christians.

*“Benedict perceives God as present immediately and actively within the ordinary materials and interactions of each day. Every encounter, every incident during the day is grist for the mill of the ongoing God-human communication. No activity is too small or too unimportant to mediate the holy. Living one's faith in this way results in a much deepened attentiveness to each moment, for we learn that the specific ordinariness of a thing or a person also reveals a more "dense" reality, that is, its glory. Benedict's Rule always celebrates the simple daily actions of one person with another, and of human hand with pot and pan, all as potentially carrying a wonderful message*.”

Do you know that you are standing on holy ground?

Peter is engaging in holy conversation in story after story.Just prior to Peter’s misunderstanding of Jesus’ goal and purpose—just prior to this is his *understanding* that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God. Again from last week, we remember that Jesus asked the simple question, “who do you say that I am?” and Peter is the first to respond. But now what Peter doesn’t get, or doesn’t *want to* understand is that being the Christ is not an easy role; he doesn’t want to know that our salvation or Jesus’ Lordship somehow rests on the cross. We spoke about that in our Bible study this week. But it does. There is a strange, surprising way that Jesus’ lordship rests on the cross. Sometimes, we don’t want to know that following Jesus—or maybe oftentimes—that our following Jesus means following the more difficult path, one that will have us at odds with societal norms or easy living. Still, we have a model in Jesus that involves moving forward, in this case forward toward Jerusalem, actively trying to be a part of God’s plan for more ultimate redemption of the world. Yes, a plan for more complete redemption of all the world, but beginning now and with us.

I said there are three passages to think about and the third is, again, about identity. What is that we are saying when we say “I am.”Peter has identified Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God, and if you were here last week you’ll remember that we focused for a while on that bold statement and then asked, when we say *“I am* a Christian . . .” what do we mean? Do we allow ourselves to be who Jesus asks us to be in today’s passage from Matthew? That is, do we take up Jesus’s cross? I like to go back to a theologian who eventually ended up at Union Theological Seminary. Kosuke Koyama's 'No Handle on the Cross' has this wonderful image: "There is no convenient way to carry a cross....if we put a handle on the cross to carry it as a businessman carries a briefcase, then the Christian faith has lost its ground. Jesus didn't say 'Take up your lunch box & follow me'".

President Jimmy Carter also made a statement that seems to capture the essence of today's text. He wrote, "To me faith is not only a noun, but also a verb." He went on to say, "In Christian tradition, the concept of faith has two interrelated meanings, both implying fidelity: confidence in God and action based on firm belief."

This sounds like what Paul has to tell us in his letter to the Romans, doesn’t it? *I am* a Christian. So what?

Who are we to proclaim anything? Who am I to proclaim anything? Who am I to say “I am” about anything sacred or important? Well, we hear today how God called Moses**;** how God called Peter**;** and we need to know that God calls us—to live and to love, to heal and to feed; to vote and to campaign; to pray and to bless. And as we have been hearing through the morning, call us to bless, and to bless, and to bless and to love. And let all God’s people say, “Amen.”