

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

<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

<sup>12</sup> 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 will worship God on this mountain.”

<sup>13</sup> 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?”

<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

<sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, 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 you shall call me  
from generation to generation. (Exodus 3:7-15 NIV2011)

### **Who Am I?**

You woke up ready to get back at it again. You go through your mental checklist. The sheep have everything they need—check. They aren’t getting into anything they weren’t supposed to—check. No other wild animals or anything else to put them in danger—check. It was the good life. You liked it. You had moved the flock to this area next to the mountain because you knew you would find food. Another day in the office as a shepherd. That is, until something catches your eye. At first you couldn’t believe it. A bush was on fire! You were sure of it. How could it be? You didn’t see or hear anything. Even stranger though: it wasn’t burning up. You had to go and see what was going on. Bushes on fire quickly went up in flames. But not this one. How could it be? As you carefully walk closer you blink a few times and shake your head to make sure you weren’t seeing things. Maybe you hadn’t slept the best last night. Maybe you forgot to drink enough and were a little dehydrated. But no amount of blinking and head shaking could remove the sight before your eyes.

And then you hear it: “Moses! Moses!” coming from the bush. And as you respond you hear the warning, “Do not come any closer! Take off your sandals, you are standing on holy ground.”

Out of respect, you start unlacing your sandals when you hear who is speaking to you, **“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.”** What could you do but hide your face? Who can stand in the presence of the holy God?

Then God explains how he isn't a far off distant God who is too busy to care for his people. No, he had seen the misery of the Hebrews in slavery in Egypt. He heard their cries. He knows their pain. He has come down to deliver them from slavery and give them a home. It all sounds so great until God says, “Go! I am sending you to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And you will lead my people, the sons of Israel, from Egypt.”

Trying to wrap your head around the entire situation you just have to ask it, “Who am I?” It had been forty years since you left Egypt; but, you could remember it like yesterday. It had been forty years since you took matters in your own hands and you killed an Egyptian. Yeah, you were doing it in defense of your fellow Hebrew. But Pharaoh wanted you dead. On top of that, after 40 years, you could still hear the accusing words after you tried to break up another fight between two other Hebrews, **“Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?”** (Exodus 2:14). Forty years you had been in exile. And, for all intents and purposes, you were content. No, it didn't have all the royal perks. But you had a family. You had job security. You were a shepherd. “Who am I to go make demands of Pharaoh after what I did? Who am I to lead a people who want nothing to do with me? They didn't want me then, why should they now? Who am I to deliver this great nation out of slavery?”

Who am I? Did you wonder that when you approach God's holy ground? No, we don't to face a burning bush but we approach God in his Word. And so we do want to have this reverence when we come to God's house and approach him. Take a moment and really think about that. Here God comes down to us! He speaks to you, reveals his will, not from a burning bush but from the preaching from the pulpit and the offering of the Sacraments. And, now, that same God sends you.

And that question comes to mind: “Who am I?” Like Moses, we struggle with self-doubt because down deep we know who we are. You try to do your best but it doesn't seem to be enough. You want to do better but you keep coming up short. You maybe are frustrated with life because things aren't working out the way you want. You feel resentful because your hard work goes unnoticed or is under-appreciated. You are confused because you don't want to do next and are struggling to find your purpose in life. You maybe can't help

feeling bitter towards other people. You just feel grumpy day after day. You are just trying to get through life! Who am I?

Who am I to go and confront my family member who is living in sin neglecting God's Word and Sacraments? Who am I to invite someone who has been gone for a while to come to church with me (even before this whole COVID-19 business!)? Who am I to speak to that stranger who walks through the church doors? Who am I to take the time out of my busy life-schedule to serve in this way? Who am I? You are pretty sure you aren't the right person for the job. You are sure you don't have the right talents, gifts, personality needed. You are sure someone else would be far better suited and should be doing the task. You are, after all, just a kid, a rancher, a truck driver, a caretaker, a retired person, a shut-in, or fill-in-the-blank.

Who am I with my laundry list of failures and broken promises? Who am I with those hurtful thoughts you've had towards your fellow human beings? Who am I with my sin-stained hands that do the things you know you shouldn't or failed to do the things you should? Who am I when so often I stand defiant before God because you feel what he asks you to do is too great, too much handle, or unfair? We try so hard to hide it. We do our best to ignore it. We would be mortified if more knew the sins we struggle with and fall into time and again. Who am I that God chooses me not just to share the Good News but to be in his presence? You know how you struggle with a certain sin today. You know your sins of years past.

When Moses asks that question, God doesn't go into detail why Moses would make a good leader. There's no boosting of Moses's self-pride or fixing Moses's view of his self-worth. Instead, God shows Moses it's not about you. He says, "I will be with you. You aren't in this on your own. I will be with you every step of the way. And you can look forward to when you and my people will worship me on this very same mountain you stand on today."

And when that's not enough for Moses, God does not lash out with holy fire from that burning bush. Instead of treating Moses as his lack of trust and self-focus deserves, he deals with Moses in mercy. God gives him the name, "I Am Who I Am."

What he is saying to Moses is, "I cannot compare myself to anything else. I belong in a class to myself. So don't try and put me in a box doubting what I can and cannot do. I am perfectly independent so that how I think, how I act is not determined by anyone or anything. I Am. That means I'm not changing. I'm the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. I am over and above all things. I am perfectly independent so I don't need anyone or anything. And still, I'm choosing you to do this work. I've chosen this people for myself. I am the one who hears the cries of my people. I am the one who sees the oppression they endure. And I have come down to deliver and save them."

It's that same I Am who descends again not as the angel of the Lord in the burning bush but as a baby. The I Am takes on flesh and blood, is born of a human mother, and places himself within time and space to deliver his people again. The infinite I Am shares in our finite weaknesses placing himself under our same limitations and struggles. He descends because he sees the devil oppressing his people. He knows how sin binds them to its will so all they can do is sin and their best actions are still disgusting in God's sight. He watches as they wander through this strange land of death that is this world. And so he comes, the I Am, Jesus, to save sinners, of whom I am the worst. Which means he comes to save you, because you are a sinner too. It doesn't look like much as he hangs from that cross bleeding and struggling to breathe. But on that cross where Jesus dies, he crushes the devil's head destroying his work. He breaks the chains of sin so that you would be set free. And when Jesus rises from the dead he pulls you out of the depths of death with him.

So, who am I? Jesus delivers you from the devil so that he cannot make you do anything. Jesus frees you from the slavery of sin so it does not control you or your life. Who are you? You were bought at the price of Jesus' blood that pays your debt of sin and your sinful self-focus in full. You are a baptized child of God whose sins he washed away. You are a people of God who he has chosen from before the foundation of the world was set. In his mercy God does not treat us as we deserve. While we were still sinners—resentful, frustrated, bitter, self-righteous and everything else—God chose you and declared you not guilty of sin. Who you are is not reliant on how you view or feel about yourself. It's not dependent on how the world sees you. This is what Jesus declares you to be on the cross. And because he is the I Am, his opinion about you is not going to change.

It's that same I Am who took a personal notice of you when you brought to that font and made his child. He descended within time and space again to put his name on you. And now he selects you for this work. In whatever vocation you are in in life, it's extraordinary because God chooses you. See what God has done for you, what mercy he shows not treating you as your sins deserve. See how he continues to give you this love and does not take it away. It's that same I am God who now sends you to set others free. You have Good News to speak that Jesus forgives all. You have peace with God to share that frees from fear and sin. You have the good news that releases people from the holds of this sinful dead world. Don't worry. As it was with Moses, it is with you. You aren't in this alone. You aren't the one who does the freeing. God works in you and through you. He is with you as he puts on your hands and speaks through your mouth to carry out this good work.

But you might still be asking, "Who Am I?" We are, after all, simple people. We tried before. We used to do all these different things! Neat. Good work. Do it again. It's not about who you think you are. It's about who God is and what he does for you. Amen.