

Exodus 3:1-15

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' He said further, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' He said, 'I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.'

The Divine Name Revealed

But Moses said to God, 'If I come to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your ancestors has sent me to you", and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' He said further, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "I am has sent me to you." ' God also said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you": This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations.

Romans 12:9-21

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, '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.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

“It’s All in a Day’s Work”

Rev. Charles Schuster

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Abraham Heschel wrote that God is hiding in the world and our task is to let the divine emerge through our deeds. How does the divine emerge from our deeds? What are the consequences of our labor? What is the work we do? What is the work you do? What is the work that is ours, and who are we when we are no longer paid to work? It’s all in a day’s work, it’s all in a day’s work. Bill Coffin in his book *A Passion for the Possible* tells us his ideas of work, and he wants us to differentiate between a calling and a career. A career seeks to be successful. A calling seeks to be valuable. A career tries to make money. A calling tries to make a difference. A career demands technical intelligence to learn a skill, to fine out how to get from here to there, whereas a calling demands critical intelligence to question whether there is a place we want to go. It’s all in a day’s work.

Three things. In every day, in every life, employed, retired, student, child. Three things. First of all, there is a part of our day’s work that is imperative. It’s the part of our work that is necessary and sometimes it’s most of what we do. We do it because we must. Look at Moses. What was he doing? Keeping the flock for his father-in-law Jethro. It was imperative. Somebody had to keep the flock. Moses got hired. I think Jethro never thought Moses would amount to much. I can imagine the time when Moses talked to Jethro about marrying his daughter. You can almost hear Jethro say to Moses, “I understand you want to be a prophet, a preacher. How are you going to be a preacher, how are you going to be a prophet, if you’ve got a speech impediment, you stutter? How are you going to be a preacher, a prophet, if you stutter? Have you thought about being Vice President? And how are you going to support my daughter in the manner in the manner to which she has become accustomed?” And you can almost hear Moses saying to Jethro, “It’s going to take both of us to do that. Let’s form a partnership.” And Jethro said, “Tend my sheep.” That’s how it happened. Every job has an imperative part, and we all do what we must.

Whenever there’s been a garage sale at any church I’ve served, including this one, someone always gives me a gift that has been purchased in the garage sale. Usually it’s presented to me in a kind of prominent place in my office, and it’s always anonymous. Last church I was in, I got this plaque on my desk that said, “It’s hard to soar like an eagle when you’ve got to fly with turkeys.” I was never sure who the turkeys were. This year, when I came to church last Sunday morning, someone had slipped into my office and put a plaque on my desk that said, “My job: It’s not my place to run the train, the whistle I cannot blow, It’s not my place to say how far the train’s allowed to go. It’s not my place to shoot off steam, or even clang the bell. But let the damn thing jump the track, and see who catches hell.” I think that pretty well describes the job of senior minister at a large church, and I’m not being negative about this, or cynical, because my job is to give credit when things go well to the people who helped make them well. That’s my job

because credit should be given. And then it's my job to take responsibility when things fail, so we can fix what is broken and do a little better when we're doing a little less. That's my job. It's the imperative. We do what we must, we do what is necessary. It's all in a day's work.

King Duncan tells a story about a married couple who had sharp disagreements, and yet she always remained calm. One day her husband commented on the restraint. "When I become angry with you, you never fight back. What's the secret of your control? How do you control your anger?" And she said, "I work it off by cleaning the toilet." And he said, "I don't see how that helps." And she said, "I use your toothbrush." It's all in a day's work. Somebody's got to clean the cages at the zoo, somebody's got to wash the dishes at the school cafeteria, somebody's got to sweep out the Pepsi Center, and somebody's got to take down the platforms at Invesco Stadium where the Rams are going to beat the Bucks today. Somebody's got to do the books at the end of the year, and somebody's got to write the checks at the end of the month, and somebody's got to teach the third grade class when there are 17 kids who have shown up, 17 kids who have been in school for two weeks and are tired of learning anything. Somebody's got to pull the weeds and cut the grass. It's the imperative part of work, it's doing what is necessary, it's doing what we must. It's all in a day's work, and we've all got it. But that's not all there is in a day's work. There's also the initiative part, personal initiative. We do it our way, and we do it with style.

Kahlil Gibran is the one who said "Work is love made possible", and that's good advice. Whoever said it, whatever your lot in life, build something on it – maybe a Habitat house. Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable, someone said. Be honest and frank anyway. The good you do may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. The people with the biggest ideas are often shot down by the smallest people with the smallest ideas. It's okay, think big anyway. People favor underdogs, but follow only top dogs. Fight for some underdogs anyway. And when you spend years building up something that could be destroyed overnight, you might get discouraged. Build it up anyway. We take the initiative, we do it our way, and we do it with style.

Robert Shuler tells a story of two fellows sitting on the riverbank on a still evening, early in September, about dusk, and they're listening to the sound of the chorus of crickets, and one of the commented, "Crickets sure to sing loud," and the other guy answered, "Yep, they sure do," and as he was saying that, they both heard the sound of the choir rehearsing in the nearby church, and the first guy said, "Sure is beautiful music, isn't it?" and the other man was thinking about the crickets, not the choir, and said, "And to think, they do that by rubbing their legs together."

Next Sunday our choir will have new choir robes and they sure will sing beautiful music, probably better than they did today, though that would be hard, but they'll do it with style, and they'll do it their way, and probably not the same way crickets make music, with their legs, but we'll see. We'll see. It's all in a day's work. Take the initiative, do it now while you can, and do it your way. Paul the Apostle said, "Let love be authentic." Resist what's evil and do what's good and be kind to one another and be honest in

business. Never lose your passion, and be aglow with the spirit, and live in peace with everyone. The initiative in a day's work, we do it our way. There's a member of the church who writes a column in a local newspaper, Katie Piotrowski. She's a career counselor, and I asked her this week to send me some examples, anonymously of course, examples of people she's worked with who in their own way took initiative to do their work. She told me about a woman who worked as a bank teller for years, handling other people's money, and she became aware of the fact that they systems work against people who are poor. And so she decided to start a business of her own, to work with those folks, and she did, and she lost everything she had. Her business failed. Then she learned what it is to live day by day, and how it is to wonder how you're going to pay the bills. Finally when she got her finances back together, now she puts together a business that organizes conferences to educate people on the challenges that poor people have, so that institutions can be helpful. She took the initiative. She learned as a bank teller, she saw it as a loan specialist, she experienced what it is to have her own business fail, and to work her way back. She did it her way, as a credit counselor, and it all came together for her.

Then Katie told me about a man who spent 25 years managing a medical practice dealing with red tape and health care systems and egos of doctors, and one day decided to make a change, and his life took off in a brand new direction. He took over a business that provides in-home care for homebound people, and all the skills he had, he could use. He knew how to run a business, he understood the health care world, and he could interact with health-care personalities and egos. He did it his way. He took the initiative.

It's interesting to me to have learned about Teddy Roosevelt from the book written by David McCullough this summer, it's one of the book reviews, *Morning on Horseback*. It told the story of a man who lived his life with style, and all his life did it his way. His children understood that about their father, their father's need to be unique and to assert himself. One of his children said of their father, "Father always wanted to be the bride at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral." But it isn't about being the center of attention, it's not about being anything like that, it's about being centered and assertive when you need to be. It isn't about being arrogant or obnoxious, it's about finding the courage to be different, and that means you swim upstream every now and then. It means that we put a personal stamp on what we do and say. It may be subtle, it may not be loud, but we do it our way. We take the initiative, and we do it with style. It's love made visible, and it's all in a day's work.

There's a third thing that's part of everybody's day's work. We may never see it, but it's part of it, even though we don't know it perhaps. I call it infinity. It's doing it up big, it's doing what we do and really never seeing where it goes. We take our work and we go as far as we can with it, knowing it's going to go further than we took it. The cartoon character Pontius Puddle, he's talking to a friend and he says, "I've decided, this coming year I'm going to make a difference in the world." The friend answers and says, "Really, how are you going to do that? Are you going to do something to feed the billions of people who are hungry in the world, or the 25 million who are displaced by war, or are you going to do something about caring for the 11 million AIDS orphans in Africa, or the five million American homeless people?" And Pontius Puddle answers, "Suddenly my

plan to decorate fireplugs is feeling a little puny.” But it shouldn’t. Anything we do, we never now how far it can go. Take it as far as it will go. We take our jobs, whatever we do, and we watch.

Moses saw a burning bush, and it wasn’t George. It was a bush that wouldn’t burn. It wasn’t consumed by the fire. Moses really never got to the Promised Land, that’s an interesting thing. We all see bushes that are not consumed. Every day we see them if we look. We never know, when we look, how far we can see. We never are aware, exactly, when we do something, what exactly the consequences are. We never can tell, when we finally find ourselves, what we can become.

The son of a single mom, raised by grandparents, pushed by a mama to excel, father was Muslim, mother was Christian, never really knew his dad, and he had a funny name. Son of a soldier, went off to Annapolis, graduated at the bottom of his class, was in a war people still fight about when they talk. Captured, tortured, imprisoned, left for dead. Would have guessed what would have happened to them, but one of those two is going to be our President.

She was a PTA mom, a hockey mom, she just wanted to be mayor of a small town. She became governor of a state. How far could she go? He was born in a poor family, his dad was unemployed, almost killed in a car wreck, lost one of his children and his wife. Was caught plagiarizing the speech of someone else and had to resign a campaign in disgrace. A hockey mom and a disgraced politician, who knew what might become of them. But one of them is going to be a heartbeat away from the Presidency. Four people who have seen a burning bush.

Louisa May Alcott wrote, “Far away there, in the sunshine, is my highest aspiration. I may not be able to reach it, but I look up and I see its beauty. I believe in it. I try to follow it.” Infinity. We do it up big. We take it as far as we can take it, and never know how much further it will go. Infinity. We do it up big. Gandhi said, “I believe in the essential unity of all that lives. Therefore I believe that if one person gains spirituality, the whole world gains it.” Years ago someone asked Boris Yeltsin what gave him the courage to stand up to the Communists in the Soviet Union. He said, “There was an electrician in Poland. His name was Lech Walesa.” When Lech Walesa was asked the same question, he said “There was an African-American Baptist preacher named Martin Luther King, he started it.” Someone asked the same question to Martin Luther King, he said “There was this woman, this housecleaner. She ironed clothes, she did laundry. Her name was Rosa Parks. She wouldn’t move to the back of the bus. She started it.”

E. B. White once said, “Every morning I awaken, and I’m torn between the desire to save the world and my inclination to savor it.” It’s all in a day’s work We do what we must. We do it our way, and we do it up big. And our little part is connected to something bigger, and something bigger is connected to something we can barely see. It’s conversation between Charlie and Lucy. “Why do you think we’re put here on this earth, Charlie Brown,” Lucy says. “It’s to make people happy,” he answers. Lucy’s not pleased with that answer, and she says, “I don’t think I’m making anybody happy, and of course

nobody's making me very happy either." She becomes indignant and raises her voice in protest and says, "Somebody's not doing his job." Our job is to let the divine emerge. It's all in a day's work, and at the end of the day, let no one accuse us of not doing it.