

Romans 12:9-21

⁹ Love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good.

¹⁰ Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other.

¹¹ Don't hesitate to be enthusiastic—be on fire in the Spirit as you serve the Lord! ¹² Be happy in your hope, stand your ground when you're in trouble, and devote yourselves to prayer.

¹³ Contribute to the needs of God's people, and welcome strangers into your home.

¹⁴ Bless people who harass you—bless and don't curse them.

¹⁵ Be happy with those who are happy, and cry with those who are crying.

¹⁶ Consider everyone as equal, and don't think that you're better than anyone else. Instead, associate with people who have no status. Don't think that you're so smart.

¹⁷ Don't pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions, but show respect for what everyone else believes is good.

¹⁸ If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people.

¹⁹ Don't try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. It is written, *Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back, says the Lord.*

²⁰ Instead, *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. By doing this, you will pile burning coals of fire upon his head.*

²¹ Don't be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good.

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b

Give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make his deeds known to all people!

² **Sing to God; sing praises to the Lord; dwell on all his wondrous works!**

³ Give praise to God's holy name! Let the hearts rejoice of all those seeking the Lord!

⁴ **Pursue the Lord and his strength; seek his face always!**

⁵ Remember the wondrous works he has done, all his marvelous works, and the justice he declared—

⁶ **you who are the offspring of Abraham, his servant, and the children of Jacob, his chosen ones.**

²³ That's how Israel came to Egypt, how Jacob became an immigrant in the land of Ham.

²⁴ **God made his people very fruitful, more powerful than their enemies,**

²⁵ whose hearts God changed so they hated his people and dealt shrewdly with his servants.

²⁶ **God sent Moses his servant and the one he chose, Aaron.**

⁴⁵ Praise the Lord!

Exodus 3:1-15

Moses was taking care of the flock for his father-in-law Jethro, Midian's priest. He led his flock out to the edge of the desert, and he came to God's mountain called Horeb.

² The Lord's messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire in the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was in flames, but it didn't burn up.

³ Then Moses said to himself, Let me check out this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn't burning up.

⁴ When the Lord saw that he was coming to look, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

Moses said, "I'm here."

⁵ Then the Lord said, “Don’t come any closer! Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground.”

⁶ He continued, “I am the God of your father, Abraham’s God, Isaac’s God, and Jacob’s God.” Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the Lord said, “I’ve clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I’ve heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain.

⁸ I’ve come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that’s full of milk and honey, a place where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites all live.

⁹ Now the Israelites’ cries of injustice have reached me. I’ve seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them.

¹⁰ So get going. I’m sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

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

¹² God said, “I’ll be with you. And this will show you that I’m the one who sent you. After you bring the people out of Egypt, you will come back here and worship God on this mountain.”

¹³ But Moses said to God, “If I now come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ they are going to ask me, ‘What’s this God’s name?’ What am I supposed to say to them?”

¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I Am Who I Am. So say to the Israelites, ‘I Am has sent me to you.’”

¹⁵ God continued, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, Abraham’s God, Isaac’s God, and Jacob’s God, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever; this is how all generations will remember me.

Matthew 16:21-28

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and legal experts, and that he had to be killed and raised on the third day. ²² Then Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him: “God forbid, Lord! This won’t happen to you.”

²³ But he turned to Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan. You are a stone that could make me stumble, for you are not thinking God’s thoughts but human thoughts.”

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.

²⁵ All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me will find them.

²⁶ Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives?
What will people give in exchange for their lives?

²⁷ For the Human One is about to come with the majesty of his Father with his angels. And then he will repay each one for what that person has done.

²⁸ I assure you that some standing here won't die before they see the Human One coming in his kingdom."

Sermon

Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

Lord, open our hearts, and our lives will sing out your name.

Amen.

As the fall begins, you've already noticed that we've changed our liturgies. What you may not have noticed is that we've shifted lectionaries as well. During this Fall, our readings from the Hebrew Bible, our Old Testament, will all come from the book of Exodus. We'll follow the story of Moses and the Israelites

from the Burning Bush through liberation from slavery and into their wilderness wanderings.

On Friday night, I was fortunate to spend some time with my godsons as they saw E.T. for the first time. It's the story of a kind extra terrestrial, E.T., who develops a friendship with three young children, Elliot, Michael, and Gertie, though the strongest bond is between E.T. and Elliot. E.T. is accidentally left behind by his people when the government springs a trap on their research mission to earth, and E.T. hides out in Elliot's tool shed until the night that Elliot discovers him. Through their blossoming friendship, Elliot saves E.T. from the pursuit of government officials and returns E.T. safely home, to his people, to his community, all while E.T. saves Elliot from despair after his father abandoned the family, teaching Elliot how to love and trust and protect one another.

In today's reading from Exodus, we see another encounter between a human and an extra terrestrial. And rather than just an aliens with a glowing finger and radiant heart, Moses encounters a divinity inside of a burning bush. We find the Lord, whose name means, "I Am Who I Am" or "I Will Be Who I Will Be," who brings salvation to Moses and all the Hebrew slaves. Sidebar: having a God cryptically named I'll Be Who I'll Be is almost as ironic as an extra terrestrial named E.T. But I digress. In our biblical story, it's another story of how a human and an alien become intimately connected in their goals, and specifically, how they both seek liberation.

What makes Moses unique, however, is his incredibly reluctance to take this mission that heart. Moses encounters the miraculous, the divine, the very presence of God, and then is told: God chose you! God wants to work through you! It's not just a happenstance encounter between a child and a crash landed

alien; it's an intelligently designed meeting, God's invitation for Moses to discover more meaningful existence, more abundant life.

Moses let's fear of failure prevent him from seeing the wonder in front of his face. God! An extra terrestrial! An alien life form that created all that exists, and even more than that? This E.T. has chosen him for a mission, to give renewed life to his people, not just to free them from slavery but to lead them into an even bigger promise: the healing of all nations! Not only the liberation of his people but the restoration of all creation. The words God speaks should inspire, convict, and empower: "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. I've come down to rescue them." And more than that, Moses, I've come down to rescue them *through you*. Instead, however,

Moses's creates a wall that separates his passion from God's mission.

Imposter syndrome is a relatively new term, or at least it's recently become in vogue, but the experience is as old as history. Imposter syndrome is the feeling that you're an imposter, even or especially when you're chosen for an important job or significant honor. It's not just feeling that you're not good enough. It's feeling that soon they - whoever they happen to be - will discover you're an imposter and take everything away from you. Moses, it seems, has imposter syndrome. He's chosen by God to lead a revolution, and his response is effectively, "Well I'm not important enough to do that." Later in Exodus, he even says, "What if they don't believe me or pay attention to me? I've never been able to speak well. Just send somebody else."

I believe that, as a community here at CLC, we're at a precipice like Moses. We've seen God's presence in the burning

bush. We've encountered E.T. We've even seen the potential of the mission. The Gospel is this: God has chosen us, not just for our salvation, but to bring salvation to all who suffer. God's heard our cries and the cries of our neighbors, and God's chosen to work through us, not only to free us all from suffering, but to lead us into more abundant forms of life. It's not something we've earned. It's something we're given. Our salvation and our mission come from God.

But I imagine there's many times where we want God to send anyone but us. I'd wager that, like Moses, we'll find any measure of potential excuses to wiggle our way out of responsibility. We're not big enough to make a difference. We're not young enough to be cool. We're don't have enough energy to do what's needed. We don't have the time to commit. We don't have the necessary skill set. We can't. We don't. Or maybe it's just, we won't.

Get ready for today's cliché. It's a doozy. It's one I've heard, on a conservative estimate, a bajillion times, as a part of the church. But it's true, so if you've heard it too many times before, don't let its frequency diminish its accuracy. . **God doesn't call the equipped. God equips the called.** In other words, without God, we're entirely unequipped for the mission. But imposter syndrome sets in when we believe we have to do it without God. Every time Moses offers an excuse, he assumes that the job is entirely up to him, even when he's talking to a God inside of a burning bush that never actually catches fire. If God can make a bush fireproof, then I imagine that God can help Moses give a convincing speech and learn a few leadership skills. God doesn't call the equipped. God equips the called.

That means we've got to let God reshape our priorities. How we spend our money as a church. Where we put our individual skill sets to use. How we prioritize our time as families. On our

own, we can't make a new after school program work in ways that meet the needs of teenagers from across the community. On our own, we can't help Across the Spectrum grow beyond the community we're already reaching. On our own, we can't increase the impact of Highlander Lutherans. But we're not on our own. Our salvation and our mission comes from God, and God will equip us to meet the needs of the missions we've been sent.

But we cannot pass the buck. Like Moses, we may be afraid. We may be uncertain. We may not want God to screw up our priorities, because that will mean a change in our hobbies, our checking accounts, our calendars. But when you encounter an extraterrestrial that calls for your help, that should change everything. Even if you don't believe you're ready for the change, even if you don't believe you can help people be free, that you can help people thrive, God will equip you for mission ahead. Just say yes. Amen.