



FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY

LESSON THREE - "MOSES/EXODUS: WHAT ARE WE TO DO?"

Introduction to the Lesson -Human's as agents of God's work

This lesson explores how God relates to God's people. God uses humanity in God's creation and action within the world. In this lesson we will examine the nature of God toward suffering and oppressed people, and we will also look at Moses' role as a human agent and of God's intervention in the exodus deliverance of the suffering Hebrews. and as Finally, we'll see how Moses became the vehicle through whom God gave God's Covenant Law by which the people learn how to live with each other.

Key scripture: Exodus 2:23-25; Exodus 3: 7-10; Exodus 4:1-13; John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-8

Key points:

- o God hears the cries of the oppressed and takes notice of them
- o God is intimately involved in our suffering
- o God chooses a human to be an agent of God's active liberation
- o God is sensitive to the fears and shortcomings of God's agents and offers companionship and support to leaders.

Lesson

Moses

The central event of the Old Testament is the Exodus story. From this event emerges the identification of the nation of Israel and accounts of her successes and failings in living as God intends. Also from this event we see how God chooses to relate to God's people.

Exodus 2:23-25 reveals the nature of God: God hears the cries of the oppressed and takes notice of them. This loving nature of God is further revealed in his calling of Moses in Exodus 3:7-10. From this passage we can see that God is sensitive to the conditions of God's people through the words "observed," "heard," "know," and "come down to deliver." God is intimately involved with the suffering Hebrews. God is moved by their physical, social, economic, and political plight and is attentive to their need for deliverance. How does God choose to intervene and deliver the Hebrews from their suffering? God chooses a human to be an agent of God's active liberation.

God, in all God's wisdom and power could have intervened. Instead, God chose to work through a flawed and fearful human being: Moses. In Exodus 4:1-13, we find a leader, chosen by God, who seems a lot like us—scared, awestruck, and reluctant. Overcome with the magnitude of this task and fear of Pharaoh, Moses begged God to send someone else. Despite this reluctance God chose to send Moses, however, God was not unmoved by Moses' fear and trepidation. God sent Aaron to be Moses' partner. God gave Moses a companion and helper.

As we have seen, God could have intervened with God's own power, however, God chose to intervene through human action. Perhaps we could consider this to be the

normative way God chooses to intervene: To use God's highest creation, humanity, with all our flaws and weaknesses, with all our fears and excuses, and with all of our calling and empowerment from God to accomplish the difficult task of being God's agents in responding to the suffering that is still found in the world.

Jesus

The core event of the New Testament, the incarnation of Christ, leads us to continue to think about this idea of humans as agents of God's work in the world. God's most elaborate response to the needs of humankind for liberation was sending Jesus into the chaotic human existence.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

Paul writes of Christ's mission being God taking on human form in Philippians 2:5-8. While this dual nature of Jesus, who refers to himself both as Son of God and Son of Man, is a mysterious and deep topic debated and studied intensely throughout Christian tradition, it is foundational to think of God's ultimate intervention in human history being the incarnation, the human agency of Christ.

Like Moses, Jesus too sought out companionship along his journey. Jesus knew his ministry could not be done alone and that he would need help and support along the way. Therefore, he called the twelve named disciples and many others to be his co-laborers. Today, as disciples of Christ, we too co-labor with Christ in this calling.

While Jesus brought an immediate healing to those who needed liberation from their ailments, we, today, as his human agents can bring liberation to oppressed people through offering all persons access medicine, clean water, economic development. Couple this with teaching the Gospel as we live out our lives in Christ's service and we have holistic ministry.

Humans as agents today

God did not stop choosing human beings as agents of God's work at the end of the Biblical age. Today, God still calls people to be agents of deliverance throughout the world. The most famous American example is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who stated in his final speech (reminiscent of Moses), "I just want to do God's will. And he's allowed me to go to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land! I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as people will get to the promised land." There are many people throughout the world that God calls as agents of God's work. Contemporary examples are people like Jim Wallace (founder of Sojourners), David Beckman (president of Bread for the World), Bono (lead singer of U2 and Christian activist), Shane Claiborne (founder of the Simple Way), and Tony Campolo (Christian writer), and Marian Wright Edelman (Children's Defense Fund).

God also calls each of us as God's agents in the world today. We don't have to be big name rock stars, writers, or famous Christian activists to be used by God. When God chose Moses he was a former slave now an ordinary shepherd. All he did was respond to the call of God. God provided the way for him to deliver the Hebrews. That is all God asks of us. To simply respond and follow the way provided.

Class Discussion

- o Have you ever been fearful or reluctant to respond to God's call to action in your own life? Think about the excuses you may have offered. How did God help you to overcome those?
- o Have you felt supported in your living out of God's call in your life? Who have been some of the companions and co-workers in the work of God in your life? Who has been like Aaron to you?
- o Who are the oppressed, captive people of today? To whom is God attuned in our own time as God

was attuned to the cries of the people of Israel?

o We often hear it said that as the Church, the body of Christ, we are to be “incarnational,” to act as Jesus did in the world. How do we do that?

Individual Reflection

God has not stopped using people for God’s work in the world today and God uses “ordinary” people for that work. Take time to reflect on ways in which you can be a human agent of God’s deliverance in the world today?

Benediction

God, it takes courage to be the creatures
You made us to be.

Year after year we add to our experiences of the World,
Pushing against our limits
To find out what will budge and what will not.

We find that we can make certain things happen,
And we can prevent other things from happening.
We can make friends, and we can make enemies.
We can say “yes,” and we can say “no.”...

God, we are tentative before you,
Confused in the clutter of our abandoned dreams
and tattered faith,
worn out by our efforts to improve the world,
cramped by responsibilities,
and lost in an ocean of time.

In our brokenness we turn to You.
Resurrect the shattered pieces
Into a stronger whole.
Take te fragments of our faith, and in your mercy, Lord,
Redeem them and make us whole.

(from Prayers & Litanies for the Christian Seasons by Sharlande Sledge, p. 47)



Call To Be Attentive

Pay attention to the way God uses you this week, even in the small, everyday-ness of life. Begin a list of ways that you feel God has used you this week. Keep this list ongoing throughout this series.



Sources