

**The Third Week of Lent • March 30, 2011**

*St. John's Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA*

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Hebrews 11:1, 23-28 (Exodus 2-4)

*"By Faith: The Faith of Moses"*

Everybody knows Moses. Having been set afloat in the Nile River in a tiny ark, he was plucked out of the water by the daughter of Pharaoh. She raised the child in her household as a prince of Egypt. Years after he had left Egypt behind him, God called Moses through a bush that burned but didn't burn up. Yahweh, the Lord, gave this man a mission to bring the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt, to lead them to the land that He had promised to Abraham and his descendants. When the pharaoh disregarded Moses' appeal to let his people go free, God sent ten great and terrible judgments upon Egypt and her false gods. Moses was there for the parting of the Red Sea, where the waters divided to let the children of Israel cross over on dry ground. God summoned Moses up on Mt. Sinai and gave him the tables that bore His instruction for His people, the Ten Commandments. Moses served as the judge and leader for this nation with God-given strength and vitality, even through their decades of wandering the vast wilderness. At the end of his life, the Lord showed Moses the land that into which He was welcoming His chosen people, the land that He has promised. And then, God Himself laid Moses to rest and buried him. **That's a pretty epic life story!**

If we start to take a closer look at Moses' life story, though, we begin to see that he was very much human. He didn't always make the right choices: when standing up for one of his Hebrew brothers who was being beaten by an Egyptian, he killed the Egyptian and hid the man's body in the sand. And how does Moses respond to God's calling to lead the children of Israel out from their captivity? "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" "The people won't believe me or listen to me." "I'm not a good speaker." "Please send someone else." Moses resisted God's call until he exhausted all his excuses. Later on, Moses would become frustrated with the people (on multiple occasions), even as we heard in this past weekend's reading from the Old Testament. He tried to do too much on his own. Come to think of it, Moses sounds a bit like you and me.

**God was faithful to Moses even though he wasn't a perfect man.** And through Moses, God was faithful to His people. Even from the earliest days of Moses' life, God was protecting him and preparing him for the role that he would one day play in the rescue of the Hebrew people. God gave the child faithful parents, who disobeyed Pharaoh's evil order to cast out their newborn boys, sheltering him for as long as they could. God brought Moses into the care of the pharaoh's daughter, where he would be raised as Egyptian nobility, learning from one of the most advanced civilizations of the time – and yet, his own mother would serve as his nurse (and get paid for it!) so that he could know his people and his heritage. Moses had the best of both worlds growing up. God gave Moses his own family when he left Egypt and lived in Midian. At the burning bush, God patiently responded to each of Moses' objections, providing his reluctant and ill-spoken servant with everything that he would need to carry out the mission that he was being given, even in his older brother Aaron as a spokesperson before the people. God continued to watch over Moses throughout his life, even to the day he died.

**Moses lived by faith, faith that comes from God's faithfulness.** As we read in our text from Hebrews, Moses could have lived a life of luxury as a prince of Egypt. Instead, he chose to be with his people, even though he could never have suspected how God was going to call him to serve that people. Called by God at the burning bush, **Moses responded in faith by trusting and obeying God.** He returned to Egypt, the land that he had left behind years before, to call Pharaoh to set God's people free from slavery. Moses served as God's agent, repeatedly delivering God's message and wonders to the leader and people of this superpower of the ancient world. He shared God's

instruction with the people in preparation for that first Passover, in which Yahweh would spare His people through the blood of a lamb. Throughout all these amazing happenings, Moses continued to trust and obey the Lord, following where He led, assured and convicted that God would do what He had promised to do.

**In this Lenten season, you may very well be struggling with the reality of your imperfection.** That reality might keep confronting you, leaving you wondering if you're up to the challenges that we face in this broken-down world, especially as people who have been called by Christ to follow him. Like Moses, you might be wondering, "Who am I to do this?" "People won't listen to me." "I'm not good enough or strong enough to live and act like God wants me to." "Why doesn't He just go with someone else?" But as He was with Moses, God is faithful to and through you and me today, even though we are not perfect people. He continues to provide you with everything that you need to live as His chosen people in the world. He has spared you with the blood of the perfect Lamb, His Son. From before the day that you were born, including the day that He delivered you by bringing you through the water of Baptism, God has been watching over you and preparing you for the work that He sets before you each day.

We need not – we cannot – live by our own strength and ability. **Rather, in faith, we trust and obey God's instruction from day to day.** Moses' faith was a gift from God, just like ours. Because of faith, we may trust that the Lord remembers us and that we are not strangers to Him and His love. We have the cross to remind us that God gave His Son to bring us out of slavery to sin and death. Through the blood of the Lamb, we have forgiveness for our imperfection. Because of the faith that God gives, we are enabled to obey His word, even in the face of the challenges we encounter in life – even if the challenge is as powerful as Pharaoh. Like Moses, we don't have the ability to see the big picture. **That's not for us to do.** Obeying the Lord in faith, trusting in His mercy and grace, we can live and follow Him, wherever He sends us.

The Lord has called you to be His servant. By faith, He continues to prepare you and provide for you. He sends you out as His agent, to share His message through your words and deeds. He has promised to never leave you. And one day, you will see him face to face. **And that's a pretty epic life story.**

Amen.