

# “God’s Will and My Inadequacy”

John 3:9-18

During our Lenten journey this year, our sermon series is focusing around the theme: “Thy Will Be Done.” These are words we say repeatedly, daily, every time we worship. These are words our Lord taught us to pray. These are words that are very often extremely difficult to say and to truly mean “Thy will be done.” We have all been in those circumstances in life when we see the will of God played out before our eyes and all we want to do is throw our hands in the air and cry out with the sentiment of the Psalmist: Why do the people of God suffer? Why do the wicked prosper?

The Psalms are filled with such cries to the Lord. Read Psalm 73, 74, 77 just to name a few. We look at the unjust world around us and cry out, “How long, O Lord?” There is nothing wrong with such a cry. It is essentially the petition to God: “Thy Kingdom Come.” How long O Lord before You come and bring an end to all of this. But Jesus also teaches us cry out (and mean it): “Thy will be done.”

We began our Lenten journey on Ash Wednesday with one of the most challenging stories. We know the story so well. Abraham is

commanded by God Himself to take Isaac to a distant mountain (Mt. Moriah.) When they get there, Abraham prepares to go through with the order to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. I couldn't imagine the angst Abraham was feeling.

Tonight, we travel to a different mountain – Mt. Sinai. And we see Moses who has also been confronted by God. And like Abraham, Moses has also been assigned with a challenging task – although not nearly as challenging as taking a knife to your son and sacrificing him. And like Abraham, Moses is filled with angst, with anxiety, with an overwhelming distress which leads him to say, “Who am I to go before Pharaoh . . . Please send someone else.”

Moses objects to God's request, and the Lord says, “But I will be with you.” And Moses looks for more ways to weasel out it, and God repeatedly assures Moses that He will perform signs and wonders which will cause Pharaoh to “let My people go.”

Moses objects some more. God shows Moses some of the signs and miracles he will perform – his leprous hand and his staff turning into a snake. And Moses objects even more, “Oh Lord, I am not eloquent. I am slow in speech and tongue.” And the Lord says, “I am the One who gave you a mouth. Trust Me that I can give you the words with which to use it.” And Moses says, “Oh my Lord, please send someone else.

Moses is feeling inadequate, or at least he is expressing that as an excuse. The reality is that his focus was all wrong. At every turn, he looked inward for how God's will would be accomplished. "Who am I to go before Pharaoh?" "I am not eloquent. I am slow in speech." (I, I, I.)

Where should Moses' attention be? The Living God is speaking to him from a burning bush and says, "I will be with you." "I am the One who gave you a mouth." "I will give you signs and miracles to perform." Should Moses feel inadequate to turn his staff into a snake? Yes, except for the fact that God has specifically told him that this is what he is going to do.

When Jesus tells Nicodemus that "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and Nicodemus says, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb? Notice that he also is focusing on his work and obvious inadequacy for accomplishing the will of God. How can I be born when I am old? (I, I, I)

In our Gospel reading, Jesus calls out Nicodemus' inadequacy. He says, "You are a teacher of Israel. Why do you not understand these things? I am speaking to you about earthly things and you don't believe. How can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" Quit focusing on yourself.

Was Moses inadequate to say the words which would sway Pharaoh to "let My people go?" Yes, except for the fact that God would be with him and would not only give him the words but the signs and miracles also.

Was Moses inadequate to speak to a rock and have water pour out for the Israelites in the wilderness? Yes, no one has that authority over nature – except God. Which is why we really see Moses' inadequacy in that he doesn't trust that it will happen without striking the rock as God had him do several times before.

Were the Israelites inadequate to survive the bites of the fiery serpents in the wilderness? Yes, which is why God had Moses lift up the bronze serpent on a pole so that all they had to do was look to it and God would provide total healing.

Was Nicodemus inadequate to be born again and see the kingdom of God? Yes, except for the reality that it is God who would do this good work in him.

Are you inadequate to be born again and see the kingdom of God? Are you inadequate to fight against your sinful desires? Are you inadequate to fix and heal all the things which ail this world and which find their way into your life and disrupt the peace and comfort you desire? Yes, you are inadequate to do any of that. We must look to our Lord, we must look to Christ and say "Thy will be done."

And, the Lord says to you, "Fear not. I will be with you." Amen.