

Pentecost 22—November 9, 2025

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Beloit, WI

Pastor Matthew E. Thompson

Text: Exodus 3:10-15 (also: Luke 20:37-38)

Exodus 3

¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” ¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” ¹² He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

¹³ Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

Luke 20

³⁷ But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. ³⁸ Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him.”

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

“Who Am I?”

I can relate to Moses’ question: **“Who am I that I should go?”** Even after the great **“I AM,”** YAHWEH, the LORD God ALMIGHTY assured Him, **“I will be with you,”** still, Moses was not convinced: **“Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.”** ¹¹ Then the Lord said to him, **.. “I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.”** ¹³ But he said, **“Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.”** (Exodus 4:10-14)

Today's Scripture readings hold special meaning for me as a pastor . . . as I'm sure they do for Pastor Duer (whom you will welcome as your new pastor this afternoon) . . . or any faithful pastor . . . or any faithful Christian. We all ask, **"Who am I** to speak for God, or even stand before His presence?"

I once officiated a funeral for a vibrant 56-year-old daughter, sister, wife, and mother had been suddenly taken from her family in a head-on collision. **"Who am I,"** to think that I could say or do anything that could break through the shock and anger and confusion and pain of the mom and dad, the widowed father of three (from 19 to 23), the three sons, or the sister who had lost her only sibling?

I began the service by reminding myself and the congregation what words would I soon be speaking. They would not be *my* words. My words have no real power or lasting comfort. The words I would be speaking that evening would be *God's* Word. When God speaks, an entire universe is created. When God speaks the tomb is emptied and the stone rolled away. One day, He'll speak and with a word raise us from our graves. His Words are powerful. His Words make all things possible. His Word, not mine, would become the rod and staff of the Shepherd who was with them as they navigated the valley of the shadow of death.

My own voice, like Moses', has no power to create new life and hope in anyone. . . . But the Voice of He who calls Himself "I AM," does. Because He is "I AM" "Yahweh" "the LORD"; His Voice had the power to make Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob live on . . . even after death. Not even the chains of death could withstand the blast of His Voice, His Word. Jesus tells the Sadducees in today's Gospel reading that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are now "sons of God" and "sons of the resurrection" and even now live before God and live to Him. So will "all who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead."

Jesus would go on to reveal that He is the great "I AM" who was with Moses to set the people of Israel free from bondage. And He continues to be is with us to set us free from our sin, from death and from the power of the devil. **"Before Abraham was, I AM." "I AM" the living water. "I AM" the bread of life. "I AM" the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. "I AM" the door of the sheep through which they can go in and out and find pasture. "I AM" the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. "I AM" the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

Who am I? . . . Like Moses, I, and you, can feel unworthy and insufficient in our callings (vocations) as a parent, as child, grandparent, brother, pastor, relative, friend, student, or worker. Who am I to know what to do or what to say? I'll probably say or do all the wrong things in the wrong way. . . . I already have!

As far as that goes, who am I to stand or sit in this place, on Holy Ground, as God speaks to me through the burning bush of His pulpit, lectern, chancel, and altar? If I think about my failures, who am I that the great "I AM" would want to speak to ME or even be around ME? How can I or any of us know we are considered worthy to be called "the sons of God" and be "sons of the resurrection?"

There was a man I knew who hadn't been to church in decades. Just before he courageously stepped into the sanctuary for the first time in a long time one Sunday, he whispered to me: "I hope the walls don't cave in on me!" He was feeling unworthy and afraid of other churchgoers judging him, or . . . maybe he even thought God was judging him. He was feeling his unholiness as he stepped onto holy ground.

Another man, a prophet named Isaiah, once expressed similar thoughts and feelings of unworthiness (Isaiah 6:5): **"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"**

But then God touched Isaiah's lips while on that holy ground. Then the Voice, the voice of the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End . . . the voice of the One who changes not . . . the One who will never leave you nor forsake you boomed forth: **"Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."** (Isaiah 6:7) Or, as He said to Moses: **"I will be with you."** (Exodus 3:12)

O beloved of He-Who-Is, Who always Was, and ever shall be: listen to the voice that speaks from the holy ground of His Word and Sacrament: (Isaiah 40:10) **"Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."** Jesus, Who is the same yesterday, today, and forever promises you: (Matthew 28:20) **Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.** And, (John 5:24) **"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My Word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."** When He baptized you, the Great "I AM" took all that condemns you onto Himself on the cross. Your unworthy self died with Him on the cross and was buried with Him in His grave.

But then He raised you up as a new creation from the dead, with Him, to walk in the newness of an abundant life in Him.

O, fellow sons of God and sons of the resurrection (men and women), we can stand in awe and with confidence on His Holy Ground, for we confess: **“I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten from eternity and true Man, born of the virgin Mary is my Lord. That He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person from sin, death, and the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death; that I may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness even as He is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.”**

The next time your heart condemns you, remember that God is greater than your heart. When Satan accuses you, remember that He who is with you is greater than He who is in the world. When you begin to doubt and fear and think **“Who am I?!”** remember Who He Is and that He promises: **“I *will* be with you.”**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The peace of the Lord that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.