

"Bare Feet Required"  
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Texts: Exodus 3:1-15  
Romans 12:9-21

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My mother was pretty much against bare feet. She believed it was one of her duties as a mother to warn me any time I even contemplated going out doors without shoes. "Put your shoes on," she would say.

You've probably seen a sign at some restaurant or store that simply reads, "No Shirt – No Shoes – No Service." Whole articles have been written on the history and origin of such signs. They can still be easily purchased. *Graphics and More* sells pre-printed Window Wall Stickers on Amazon...3.99 with free shipping!

The stickers are touted as "Perfect for your business window, wall, or just about any smooth surface...Printed on glossy, white vinyl with water and UV resistant inks...Sticker size is approximately 7" (width) X 3.5" (height).

It's safer, easier, better...to wear shoes. We love our shoes, whether they be L.L. Bean boots, Nike Air high tops or a sexy pair of 3-inch Sergio Rossi heels. Whether you're partial to Keds, Clarks or Crocs – you probably have a favorite pair of shoes.

Still, there are times --- and my mother wouldn't like this --- there are times when bare feet are required, that is, if you hope to find your true calling, while having an encounter with the Living God!

Moses discovered this in the most unlikely of places. When we last met Moses – that was last Sunday! – he was still a newborn, floating down the Nile River in his cradle boat. When we meet him today, many years have passed. He was raised by that Egyptian princess and one day, after he had grown up he witnessed an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsfolk. He couldn't take it so he killed the Egyptian and buried the body in the sand. He thought he had done the deed in secret, but word got out, and so he fled for his life. He fled all the way to Midian, got married, started a family and got a job tending the sheep of his father-in-law. It was the perfect place to hide out, up in the hills with the flocks, out back of nowhere.

He spent years quietly and uneventfully leading the sheep...until one day he is stopped in his sandals by a talking bush. The bush, which was blazing, but oddly, not consumed – calls to him, "Moses, Moses!" And Moses answers what any one of us should say when the LORD calls. He said, simply, "Here, I am." And then God cautions him, "Come no closer!" The command then is to remove his sandals because he is standing on holy ground. Henceforth, God lays out what God plans to do about the plight of His people enslaved by Egypt. It all likely sounded very impressive and remarkable, but soon became startling, when God finally broke the news that he

intended Moses to be his agent: “I will send you,” God says, “I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people...out of Egypt.”

God, presumably, could liberate the children of Israel from Egyptian slavery without the help of Moses or anyone else. But the amazing thing about the God of creation is that God delights in using helpers, agents, ordinary human heroes.

God seems eager to enlist us in the accomplishment of His salvation work in the world. Whether you are an excellent carpenter or an average minister, an accomplished engineer or a compassionate physical therapist, a food service employee or a public servant, no matter our station in life, we are called as disciples in the name of Christ to care for others.

God speaks to Moses—and the place is holy ground – even though it seems a desolate mountain top populated only by grazing sheep. God speaks not in the temple or any other so-called religious setting, but in the midst of everyday work.

What if God spoke outside of church, in our every-day lives, much more often than at our worship? In fact, our worship should be a training ground where we learn to recognize holy ground out in the real world. God can transform into “holy ground” our places of business, our kitchens, our schoolrooms, our assembly lines, our grocery stores, our sidewalks or virtually any other place where people of faith find themselves.

We dare not insist on wearing shoes all the time, never mind the sign on the door, or even what your mother cautioned! Many in our world these days ask, “Where is God?”

Poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning laughs at the question, she claims:

Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;  
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.

When we plod on through life, mindlessly stomping our shod feet, we risk overlooking the new things God wants us to do in the world, preoccupied as we are with trivial things.

Sometimes we get stuck in a rut, lost in old patterns of thinking, the way we've always done it. The prophet Isaiah heard God say, “That's no way to live!” and he shared it with God's people:

Remember not the former things;  
Nor consider the things of old.  
Behold! I am doing a new thing:  
Now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?

The way out of our ruts is to be alert to burning bushes – maybe not as uncommon as we might have thought.

\* You are taking a walk when an idea occurs to you about some change you need to make in your life...could be a burning bush!

\* You are reading a book when something you have read suddenly comes alive for you...could be a burning bush!

\* You are in the midst of an argument with a close friend and are quite angry when something clicks inside your head and you get a flash of perspective, remembering that you love this person. That realization can cause the ground to shift under you, and there is suddenly a holy opportunity in your relationship...could be a burning bush!

\* You are busy with the responsibilities of the day when a child asks you to read her a story...could be a burning bush!

\* You feel rotten because you have done something which has hurt another person and then you realize that the person has come to forgive you...could be a burning bush!

\* You find yourself complaining because things aren't going well and your day is not going as you planned and then you discover a new opportunity, which never would have happened if everything went smoothly...could be a burning bush.

What if earth really is "crammed with heaven," as the poet put it?

Like Moses, when we see evidence of God's presence, we must stop, turn aside and see. These are times to lose the shoes, for there again is holy ground, where bare feet are required.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.