

## **Let's Go Back to the Top of the Mountain**

### **Exodus 3:7-12**

<sup>7</sup> The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.

<sup>8</sup> So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

<sup>9</sup> And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.

<sup>10</sup> So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

<sup>12</sup> And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you<sup>[a]</sup> will worship God on this mountain.”

In our morning text, we find Moses with a burning question at a burning bush. God, why have you chosen me to lead the Israelites out of Egypt? “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” I guess I could understand some of the reasons behind his question.

Maybe Moses felt a deep sense of personal inadequacy and insecurity. He may have questioned his abilities, qualifications, or worthiness to take on the responsibility of leading the Israelites out of Egypt. All of us, at one point or another, have felt a sense of inadequacy for the task ahead, if we are going to be honest.

Maybe because he understood the gravity of the task of challenging Pharaoh, a powerful ruler, and leading a group of people out of slavery, Moses might have felt overwhelmed by the enormity of the responsibility.

Maybe Moses lacked confidence in his leadership skills and doubted whether he could effectively lead a large group of people.

Maybe Moses just wanted God to know that he realized that the task was beyond his abilities and that he needed divine guidance and empowerment to fulfill such a significant mission.

Maybe Moses was just seeking confirmation from God, looking for assurance that he was indeed the chosen instrument for this mission.

I don't know what made Moses ask the question. But we have a record of God's response. I'll be with you. And when the captives are set free, you will worship me on this mountain.

Mountains are significant to God.

The first mountain mentioned by name in the Bible is **Mount Ararat**. It was on that mountain that, after the floodwaters receded, Noah's Ark came to rest on that mountain.

There, we witnessed God's mercy, grace, and the importance of having faith in difficult times. We saw God's love and power and hope for humanity on that mountain. (Genesis 8:4)

It was at **Mount Sinai** where Moses received the Ten Commandments and the Law from God (Exodus 19-20).

It was at **Mount Nebo** where Moses viewed the Promised Land before his death (Deuteronomy 34:1-4).

It was at **Mount Carmel** where we witnessed the contest between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18).

It was at **Mount Tabor** which was the site of the Transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:1-9).

Then, there is the **Mount of Olives**: many key events in the life of Jesus, including the Garden of Gethsemane, where He prayed before His crucifixion—a place of spiritual reflection.

Mountains are significant to God.

Mountains can also be places of tests and trials.

It was at **Mount Moriah** where we witnessed how Abraham faced a significant test when God instructed him to sacrifice his son Isaac and saw his willingness to obey God (Genesis 22).

Mountains can be places of sin and pride.

While Moses was on **Mount Sinai** receiving the Ten Commandments, the Israelites created a golden calf to worship at the mountain's base.

So, mountains matter.

And I can imagine many of the mountains that a modern-day Moses named Martin Luther King Jr. had to face when he answered God's call on his life.

He faced the mountain of:

**Racial Segregation:**

- Then it was legal segregation in public facilities, schools, transportation, and other areas enforced a separate and unequal system for African Americans, perpetuating systemic discrimination through Jim Crow laws.
- Today, the historical patterns of housing segregation and discriminatory practices still influence residential patterns, leading to unequal access to housing, neighborhood resources, and opportunities. The effects of redlining are still alive and well in America and Cleveland.

He faced the mountain of:

**Voter Suppression:**

- Then it was discriminatory practices, such as literacy tests and poll taxes, aimed at suppressing the African American vote and limiting political participation.
- Today, we still face challenges related to voter suppression, gerrymandering, and limited access to polling places meant to impact the ability of minority communities to participate in the democratic process fully.

He faced the mountain of:

**Police Brutality and Violence:**

- Systemic racism manifested in police brutality and violence against African Americans, leading to tragedies such as the murder of Emmett Till and other racially motivated crimes.
- Today, we are still trying to build bridges and improve police and community relations in the wake of those who have lost their lives. We must still address racial disparities within the criminal justice system, including arrests, sentencing, and incarceration rates, which can contribute to systemic inequalities.

He faced the mountain of:

**Economic Disparities:**

- African Americans faced economic inequalities, limited job opportunities, and discriminatory practices that hindered economic advancement.
- Today, here in Cleveland, we still see disparities in employment opportunities, wage gaps, and limited access to economic resources that contribute to ongoing economic inequality and disparities in healthcare access and outcomes, particularly affecting minority communities.

But there is one more mountain that Moses faced. That Martin faced. That we face today. That mountain is the **mountain of unrighteous mentality.**

The mountain of unrighteous mentality represents the deeply ingrained attitudes and beliefs that can hold us back from progress and positive change. Overcoming this mountain requires a shift in mindset and a challenge of preconceptions and biases to embrace new perspectives and ways of thinking. Only then can we move forward toward a brighter future.

We must continue to challenge the **hardened hearts.** The Pharaohs among us who are still resistant to acknowledging the words of the Declaration of Independence apply to all of us. We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all people are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

We must continue challenging those beset by the diseases of **pride and arrogance**—those whose desire for control causes them to defend discrimination and fundamental unfairness.

We must continue to challenge the mentality that supports or is indifferent to **injustice, oppression, and dehumanization, including all the modern-day efforts of segregation, racial profiling, and derogatory stereotypes.**

We must remain vigilant in our efforts to fight against these pervasive issues and work towards creating a more equitable and just society for all individuals, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or background.

Only by acknowledging and actively working to dismantle these harmful systems can we hope to create a better future for ourselves and future generations.

We cannot do it alone. Moses could not do it alone. Martin could not do it alone. We cannot do it alone. And thank be to God, we don't have to. The same God that was with Moses. The same God that was with Martin is the same God that is with us today.

God said to Moses then, to Martin then, and to us today, I will be with you, and when you have brought the people out of Egypt, out of an unrighteous mentality, you will worship me on this mountain.

What's on the mountain, Dr. Baston? I heard Moses made it there. Then the Lord said to him, this is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I heard Dr. King made it there. He said God's allowed me to go up 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 a people, will get to the promised land.



I heard Jesus made it there, the Mount of Olives, where he hung, bled, and died. They tell me that on the third day morning, he got up with all power in his hand.

It was there where he ascended, leaving us in anticipation of his return (Acts 1:9-12).

What's on the mountain? My God is on the mountain where he told Moses he would meet us in worship, not on a physical mountain but on an elevated place in my heart.

Because my God is on the mountain:

- **My help is on the mountain.**
- **My hope is on the mountain.**
- **My healing is on the mountain.**
- **Joy is on the mountain.**
- **Peace is on the mountain.**
- **Salvation is on the mountain.**
- **Love is on the mountain.**

Love lifted me, loved lifted me. When nothing else could help—love lifted me. Love lifted me, love lifted me—when nothing else could help, love lifted me.

Brothers and sisters – let's go back to the top of the mountain.