

Exodus 3 and 4
“New Creation”
1st Sunday in Lent

February 18, 2018
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and God our Heavenly Father. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

There are so many wonderful accounts of Moses’ life in the Bible.

You know about the murder, and the escape from Egypt.
You know about the parting of the Red Sea and the pillar of fire and smoke.
You’ve heard of the Tablets of Stone and the Golden Calf.

You remember when Moses came across the bush that was on fire
but didn’t burn up?

Of course you do. I don’t need to bore you with all those details.

But do you remember when Moses ...
didn’t want to go.
didn’t want to go back to Egypt.
didn’t want to be the leader of God’s people, those stiff-necked people.

Moses certainly never set out to be the mouthpiece of God Almighty!
With his lack of speaking ability!
Talk about the wrong person for the right job!

Moses told God that, too; Moses told the Great I am that he wasn’t!
Moses wasn’t a good choice!
Moses told him....
I am not good leader! I can’t bring weighty words with my poor speaking!

There at the burning bush Moses told God that he wasn’t up for the job.
But God didn’t listen to him.

“Oh, dear Lord,” Moses said, “Please send someone else.”
It wasn’t that he didn’t want to go back (though he didn’t want to go back);
it wasn’t that he was afraid (though, honestly, he was afraid).
Mostly, Moses just felt ... well, not up for the job.

He wasn't brave enough or smart enough or holy enough!
Why would they listen to him?

But in the end, his own inadequacy didn't matter, not to God.

God decided to use Moses, so he did.
God put his staff in Moses hand to work his miracles at his Word.
And he sent Moses and his inadequacies and his inability
to speak well and his murderous ways out to do his bidding.

Moses didn't look like a hero, leaving sheep behind to call on Pharaoh's court.
Pharaoh didn't believe him;
the people of Israel didn't believe him either;
Moses didn't even believe in himself!

But the Great I am is greater than the gods of Egypt.
The Great I am is greater than Moses inadequacy.
The Great I am will accomplish his purpose,
even when his people are weak and doubting,
confused and rebellious,
incompetent and afraid.

Moses learned firsthand that God can use inadequate people to do his saving work.

The plagues took on the gods of Egypt one by one;
these miracles came at God's holy Word, through Moses' poor voice.

The lamb's blood covered over the houses,
and the Angel of Death passed over, just as God promised.

The armies of Egypt were drowned in the waters of the Sea.

Moses saw it all happen. He was part of it all.
He was never in control. It wasn't about Him.

It's about God. The entire book of Exodus is about God and what he does.

And what he does is bring about a new creation.
His will is that all sins are forgiven, that life and salvation are yours.

[In the Garden]

It was incredibly late and the garden was awfully dark.
Or maybe the moon was shining brightly to illuminate the garden of olive trees.
– A silvery shimmer to illuminate the disciples and Jesus.

The disciples are over there – Peter, James and John. They cannot stay awake.

Jesus is up just a little further.

“[H]e fell on his face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.’” (Matthew 26:39)

Then, I can just imagine...

Jesus takes a deep breath, exhales with a sigh, looks up to heaven, and with a confident nod he whispers, *“Nevertheless.”*

He had just made his bold request to the Father. *“Let this cup pass from me.”*

“Father, you’ve prepared a table before me. You’ve filled this cup. You’ve poured your wrath into this cup, and the scent of it makes me sick. The cup is filled to the brim. It’s nauseating. The sight of it is awful. The smell turns my stomach. Let this cup pass from me.”

It reeks of idolatry. I can smell the ugliness of unfaithfulness. My nose burns with the sour scent of lies and murders and affairs and greed and hate and selfishness and rotten, rotten evil that brought these grapes to fruition. Let this cup pass from me.”

Then Jesus takes a deep breath, exhales with a sigh, looks up to heaven,
and with a confident nod he whispers, *“Nevertheless.”*

“Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

The cup set before Jesus contained God’s burning anger
against everything rotten in your life,
against everything rotten in the world.
And if Jesus drinks that cup, ***IT WILL KILL HIM.***

And so he prays. He prays for another way. *“Take this cup away!”*

But he also prays, *“Nevertheless.”*

It’s the pivotal moment in this potent prayer. *“Nevertheless.”*

In that one word, Jesus not only prays to the Father,
but he proclaims to you and to me.
In that one word, “nevertheless,” Jesus declares to us:

“God is a good Father. You can trust him.
His good will is life and love for His children.
His good will is life and love for you.

“God is a good Father. You can trust him.
Even when your situation seems full of darkness and suffering,
God is going to take care of it in ways beyond your understanding.

“God is a good Father.
Nothing can hinder His gracious will.
And His gracious will is forgiveness of sins, salvation, even life everlasting.
Even when we can’t see it,
even when we can’t feel it,
even when we can’t conceive of it.”

And so Jesus prays, “Nevertheless. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”
It’s the prayer of faith, and it’s the proclamation of God’s faithfulness.

Jesus prays “Nevertheless.” Jesus drinks the cup down to the last drop.

With innocent trust, Jesus commends himself into the Father’s hands, into God’s will, with his final breath—though that final breath turned out to be not so final in end.

Because God’s good and gracious will is life and love for His children.

Beginning with His only-begotten Son,
God began a new work that would be for all his children: resurrection,
New Creation life.

[Conclusion]

As we live that life of faith today, even before our final resurrection,
we lean into the “Nevertheless” of Jesus’ prayer,
we pray “Thy will be done.”

Seeing Jesus trust His Father,
Seeing God work through Moses,
helps us trust God as our Father, too.

When faith is manipulated, or religion becomes a tool for evil,
we cling to the gracious will of God even when it is hard to see.

And then slowly, because trust is only deepened and developed over time,
slowly we begin to echo the trust, the “Nevertheless” of Jesus’ prayer.

God, help me do well on this assignment. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”
God, I need a better job. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”
God, make me more popular. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

God, bring more people to our church. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”
God, fix what’s broken in our nation. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”
God, show this person their fault. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

God, help us conceive a child. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”
God, I want out of this marriage. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”
God, take this cancer from me. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

Jesus points us to His good Father,
a Father whose good and gracious will can be trusted,
even when we can’t see the big picture.
And so we pray, “Thy will be done.” Amen.

“Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good
that you may do his will, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.
Amen.” (Heb 13:20-21)
