

Intro.

I don't want to preach today in the traditional manner today. I know you shouldn't start a sermon like this...But here's what I mean by that. A lot is going on in our nation. I remember doing a live mobile message last year after the murder of Ahmad Aubrey (picture maybe) and I had a feeling like buckle up, this is going to be a bumpy ride. Well the recent events have revealed the unattended racial divisions in our nation. We are still struggling through a global pandemic. And more information is being revealed surrounding the attacks on our nation's capitol. And yet, I still think there is a word from the Lord today.

But instead of a sermon, I wanted to share some thoughts and have a conversation around justice today. If you are just joining us for the first time we've been in a series around "Becoming." It's our attempt as a congregation to answer who we will continue to become regardless of what goes on in the world around us and we have made a commitment to be and becoming a justice seeking congregation. Now I know I hear you (you were wondering how we were going to have a conversation, but I hear you!). A few months ago, we did a sermon series entitled "Justice or Just Us." We hosted community wide trainings on becoming Anti-Racists. We have our antiracistindy website. We hosted small groups and books studies. We have committed to supporting a minority business incubator, hosting a freedom, hosting cultural competency trainings, and that's just to name a few. As hard as this may sometime seem, you need to be commended for taking a stand against injustice and our commitment to being an open congregation because many churches of our size do not address these things in meaningful ways (And we will get to that in a minute).

But I think what's really at the core of where we are today and how we approach justice is really based around our understanding of who we know God to be. ....At the heart of our difference, is not necessarily our political associations, denominational affiliations, or whether we are conservative or liberal. We are basically asking the question "who is God? (Slide). Write some of your answers in the chat. Who is God to you?

### **Switch to Moses.**

To answer that question I want to have a conversation about Moses call story. Our text today is a widely used narrative that is known by many people. You don't have to know the Bible well to have heard about Moses delivering the people out of slavery. You've heard of the Red Sea. You've heard of the burning Bush. I hear you. Not another sermon on Moses!! I feel like a 5 year old right now when they want to watch the same movie for the 160th time. But let's look at from a different angle today.

Because in this narrative you find a few things. You can't talk about who God is without this narrative. It's a foundational piece! Because it's one of the first times that God uses possessive language to describe a group of people. This is not just a family or lineage from Abraham, no God says "these are **my** people." It is the first time that directly connects Godself to a particular community of people. God has chosen to reveal Godself to the entire world as a deity that is associated with a group of people suffering from oppression. Bold move by God. This is God's coming out to the world he decides to use a people that have been in bondage for over 400 years. Surrounding by all of the powerful deities at the playground, God says I want the guy that's 5'2" on my team with the headband and Chuck Taylors! It is this foreshadowing of God that reimagines power and possibility.

### **Moses call story.**

Which leads us to Moses' call story. So often we talk about the call without really looking at the context. Here's why Moses, the great leader of Israel is called. Here's what God says, "I have **seen** the misery/affliction of my people, **heard** their cry, **I know/I'm concerned** about their suffering, so I'm coming down to do something about it." Did you see the progression of the actions. Seen. Heard. I'm concerned. I'm doing something about it.

So Moses' call at its base level is just an invitation to join what God wants to do in the world. Here's the reality, God is a justice seeking God. A commitment to seek justice is a really an opportunity to join with what God is already doing in the world.

Don't miss what just happened! It's the first time God decides to personally intervene in the story of humanity. God is not just acting on behalf of individuals. This is not God acting with a balcony view, but no God this is God deciding that God is going to something up close and personal. Few conclusions.

### **How we do justice.**

Which gives us a framework of how we do justice. Many people will and have always asked, I want to do something I just don't know what to do. Or what does just seeking look like. Well look at God's progression of activity and use that as a framework. Did you catch what God says. God says. I have seen, I've heard, I'm concerned, I'm doing something about it. Seen, Heard, concerned, Do something.

Let's take just a few months to unpack each of those. Write these down.

**See** - After 400 years God still sees them. Their condition has not become scenery. God can't just walk past. God chooses not to ignore it. Seeing is a decision to be proactive witnesses to the world and community around us.

**Because at our core, people desire to be seen.**

**Hear** - We allow the voices of others to speak their own truth. This centers the conversation around the experiences of others. **Their suffering and experience in Egypt was not up for a debate. Their voices did not have to be proven, validated, or rubber stamped.** Because at our core, we just want to be heard. Story of College professor.

**Moved** - When what we see with our eyes and hear with our ears reaches our hearts.

**Do – Compassion moves to action. Notice God does not start with action. God does not move to fix it. But instead. God sees. Hears. Is moved. And then acts.**

### Moses Call Story

So he calls Moses to liberate his people from Egyptian oppression. Now right here is where I think we cloud our understanding. Notice God does not say go and unite them. Or go and redeem the Egyptians. Or even to help them co-exist. Those are very real options. Again just look at it for face value. Here's why... Biblically there seems to be a clear distinction between unity and equality. They are not synonymous. **A desire for unity is empty without clear commitments for equality and liberation.** (slide) Because in many ways unity can be oppressive when liberation is pacified. Is God a God of unity absolutely! It's the miracle of Pentecost. It's the miracle of the early church. Fishermen dining with prostitutes, miracle. Rich waiting for the poor to take communion. Miracle. But that was an outgrowth of God's divine call to free the people free from the systems that oppressed. Again don't lose sight of the progression. For God justice was as much about liberation as it was about unity.

Moses was an answer to an oppression problem. His call was connected to a problem in the world. The same is true for you and I. **You are uniquely called to answer a problem in the world.** You are created to be answer. For the problems in the world, God calls and sends us. So guess what, whatever God is going to do in the world, God is going to do it through you. What happens here foreshadows every other calling in the biblical narrative and that is this, every call was connected to a "problem." Every single call was answer to a problem.

How do I figure that out?

**Your unique calling the world is an intersection between your passion and a problem. (Slide)**

Prewired. Moses was prewired in advance. You see long before Moses was leading people out of Egypt, he was a prince in the palace. One day he sees one of the guards mistreating one of the Hebrews. And Moses can't understand it at the time but he sees something that moves him. He ends up killing the guard and running as a fugitive. Moses has a pre-wire for standing up for people that can't speak for themselves. Moses has a propensity for standing up to powerful people. He was pre-wired for this work. This was his passion. Its what moved him. What's true in Moses is also true for you. Your passion is pre-wired. Its in you. Its what keeps you up at night. Its what mvoes you. Its what you day dream about changing. And its different for everyone.

Some people have a heart for ex offenders. They want to see them fully acclimated into society. There are some people that have devoted their lives to saving the whales. Some people are out raising money to save the natural forests that are still left. I read on social media about a woman that spent months going around just to clean up beeches. Some people are moved by gaps in educations. Some are moved by gang violence. Some people are moved to fight for the rights of women and children. Some people are moved by hunger. Its keeps that up at night. It could be housing. The environment. It could be fresh drinking water. It could be health care. It could be voting. It could be special needs. It could be equal pay. Affordable housing. Indegious communities. Gender inclusion. Health care! You name it and there is somebody that stays up at night thinking about everything from cleaning up the beach to fresh drinking water.

(Story) When I was on the school board in Montclair, there was a guy that came to every meeting and talked about the quality of food served in the cafeteria and the getting the vendom machines out of the schools. Vitman water wasn't really that healthy. And we needed to service white meat and not dark meat. Literally he gave a presentation every single meeting. He had stats and had done extensive research! This guy had to spend hours sitting at those meetings!

Why because that was his passion. His passion intersected a problem. He was an answer to a problem.

Heres what at stake.

Here's what happens, when the church says nothing, it says to people watching "church is not the answer." But when we seek justice, its simply joining God in what God is already doing in the world. But change can happen when we take

the time to see. Hear. Be concern and move with compassion. If you don't believe me, maybe you'll listen to a judge.

Video

See

Listen

Concerned

Do something. Maybe God continue to bless us as we seek to be an answer during these troubled times.