

God Adapts

God Can: Part 1 “God Adapts”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – October 16, 2022

20th Sunday After Pentecost

Readings: Exodus 3:7-12; 4:1-17

Reflection: Psalm 48

Greeting: Let us love each other, because love is from God. Everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. God’s love is revealed to us through his only Son. Christ came to the world that we could live through him! (1 John 4)

Prayer: O God, our guide and our guardian, we humbly enter into your presence. May we be blessed by your grace and your love as we join together to worship you this day. May we grow in heart and mind with you, Lord. May you lift us up and strengthen us by your righteousness and your steadfast faithfulness. Help us to be bold in our faith so that we may do your will joyfully and eagerly. May we worship you in a spirit of truth, that we may follow you all the days of our lives, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 48

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King. Within its citadels God has shown himself a sure defense. Then the kings assembled; they came on together. As soon as they saw it, they were astounded; they were in panic; they took to flight; trembling took hold of them there, pains as of a woman in labor, as when an east wind shatters the ships of Tarshish. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God, which God establishes forever. We ponder your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple. Your name, O God, like your praise, reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with victory. Let Mount Zion be glad; let the towns of Judah rejoice because of your judgments. Walk about Zion; go all around it; count its towers; consider well its ramparts; go through its citadels, that you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will be our guide forever. (Psalm 48 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 48 and hear God’s guidance and steadfast love. We hear of God’s might and glory as we hear about God’s justice and victory. How have you experienced God’s guidance in your life? How have you been a witness to God’s justice? What does God’s steadfast love mean to you? How can you share that love with others? How can we experience God’s grace and mercy together as a community?

Prayer: O God, your steadfast love and faithfulness have brought us together this day. Help us to live by your grace and mercy always. May we share in the hope you have inspired in us and may we share always in your blessing. We ask that as we come before you with our joys and our concerns that you will strengthen us by your spirit. As you are with us in our celebrations and sorrows, may you lift us up in both our laughter and tears. May your light guide us and lead us to life everlasting, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture reading for today comes from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our reading for today comes from Exodus, chapter 3 verses 7 through 12 and chapter 4 verses 1 through 17.

Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. Now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" He said, "I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." Then Moses answered, "But look, they may not believe me or listen to me but say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.' " The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw the staff on the ground, and it became a snake, and Moses drew back from it. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and seize it by the tail"—so he reached out his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in his hand— "so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." Again, the Lord said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." He put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, his hand was diseased, as white as snow. Then God said, "Put your hand back into your cloak"—so he put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored like the rest of his body— "If they will not believe you or heed the first sign, they may believe the second sign. If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to you, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground." But Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." Then the Lord said to him, "Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak." But he said, "O my Lord, please send someone else." Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, "What of your brother Aaron, the Levite? I know that he can speak well; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with

your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you what you shall do. He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him. Take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.” (Exodus 3:7-12; 4:1-17 NRSV)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Today marks the beginning of a new series. And the series is called “God Can.” We will be looking at the way God interacts with people in the Bible and what God does. Our first message has to do with God’s ability to adapt. I say this because I think we can get caught up in the idea that if God knows all and plans for all, that everything is according to God’s plans. Which isn’t always the way things play out, because we have choices to make. We can miss how God adapts to us as part of those plans. If that sounds a little strange, let’s highlight this with our reading for today. Moses becomes an example of how God adapts to us.

We begin with a look at Moses and the interaction with God at the burning bush. And this is a rather interesting situation, because we have Moses being given an opportunity that he isn’t sure he wants. God appears to Moses as a burning bush and tells Moses that he has heard the outcry of the people. In response, he is going to send Moses to Pharaoh to deliver the people out of Egypt. But Moses isn’t sure that he’s the right guy to be going. When Moses shows his insecurity, God affirms that he will be with Moses every step of the way. Moses first expresses concern that the people won’t believe that God appeared to him. So, God has Moses throw his staff on the ground. When it hits the ground, it becomes a snake. When Moses grabs it by the tail, it becomes a staff again. This is done so that Moses may perform the sign to convince the people that God appeared to Moses. God then gives Moses a second sign. He has him put his hand into his cloak. When he removes his hand, it appears as if it is diseased. When he places it back into his cloak his hand returns to normal. This is followed by yet a third sign, that if Moses draws water from the Nile it will turn to blood when it is poured out on the ground. Moses should now be equipped for his mission. We would expect Moses to be eager to get started, right? Well, he isn’t all that ready.

God has a plan, but Moses isn’t quite on board yet. Now the complaint is that Moses has never been an eloquent speaker. He notes that even in talking to God that he isn’t speaking very well. He feels his speech is slow. God tells Moses that he’s the one that gave him speech. That of Moses will just go, God will be with him and help him to speak. But Moses is not convinced. Moses wants God to send somebody else. He feels that this is just not the right assignment for him, and that God should go pick someone else for the job. This becomes frustrating, that Moses is really not wanting to do this. God has to adapt. I say this because when we started, the plan was that Moses would go to Pharaoh and set his people free. Moses didn’t think he would be able to convince the people that God did appear to him, so God gave him signs in order to convince everyone. God has reassured Moses that he will help him to speak so that he can go and liberate the Israelites. But Moses isn’t cooperating with the plan. So, God adapts. Moses is too stubborn and things that he will not be able to speak, so God

suggests Moses' brother Aaron. Aaron can speak well and will do a fine job speaking on behalf of Moses. Aaron is even already on his way there, so the timing works out just fine. God adapts the plan. Now, Aaron will speak on behalf of Moses to the people, and everything can move forward.

Now, the reason I brought this up is because this is not part of the original plan. The original plan was that Moses would go and do everything himself. But Moses shows that he is not at all certain he can do it. So, God adapts the plan to what Moses is willing to do. This does not mean that God was wrong. We can make the mistake of thinking that if the original plan didn't go through then there must have been something wrong with the plan. And there wasn't. The plan would work fine. The problem was with Moses and his inability to believe in himself. Moses even doubts God's ability to help him to do everything. What we see here is that God is able to adapt the plan and make it happen anyway. Now, one could argue that God should have known that Moses would respond this way and should have gone with Aaron from the start. And I would argue that this would remove the ability of Moses to accept what God is asking of him. Nothing here says that God was surprised or caught off guard. God has a plan ready to go. What it does say though, is that God knew Moses could do this. God knew that Moses actually would have been able to speak, if he'd just had a little more faith. God didn't make a mistake with the original plan to have Moses do everything. No, God gave Moses the chance to do it himself. But Moses has free will and can respond. And the response is that Moses thinks that someone else would be better for the task. So, God adapts the plan to respond to Moses free will. Because God knows all the outcomes, but Moses had to choose.

That's something that sometimes we don't take into account when we think about God's plans and God's designs. We like to think that everything is going according to God's plan and that everything must be happening because it's the will of God. This can cause us to lose sight of what is going on and can give us the wrong idea. We can end up contributing things to God that are not of God. That we end up thinking that everything that happens is God's doing and we forget about human agency. When we hear about a terrible accident, or some tragedy, or someone committing a terrible evil. That it was simply God's plan. I would say that we are oversimplifying things. Somebody making a poor choice doesn't have to be God's design. God will adapt his plans based on our decisions and our choices. God will adapt to the actions that we take. But that doesn't mean that everything that happens is according to God's will. God wanted Moses to go and do this task himself without dragging Aaron into it. But because of Moses' actions, God adapts the plan. Moses' hesitancy causes God to now involve Aaron in the plans. Because God knows the infinite possibilities and can adapt according to our choices. But just because God can adapt to our decisions and our actions doesn't mean that everything that we do is part of God's plan. Sometimes God's plans adapt because we've messed up. Sometimes God adapts because we are unwilling to act, and God has to pick another way for things to happen. Sometimes God's plans alter because people refuse to do what God wants them to do. Sometimes God's plans can change because we decide on a different path than

the one God has laid for us. That doesn't mean that God didn't see that alternate path. It doesn't mean that we are somehow surprising God. It just means that God is adapting all the time to the choices that we make. Because God knows the choices we might make. God can see the outcome of every single choice we have. And God is always adapting to what we do. Because God has given us the ability to have free will. Which means that God has enabled us to make those choices and to make mistakes. God can see the infinite possibilities of what can happen and knows not just one future, but every possible future.

But in order for us to be able to follow God of our own free will, we have to be able to choose God ourselves. We must make that choice, which means we have to be willing and able to make all the choices in our lives. That it is up to us to respond to God's call and God's love. It also means God is always adapting to the things that we may be messing up. God is adapting to our hesitancy, adapting to our stubbornness, and adapting to our fears, all out of love. Because just as God came to Moses because he loved him, just as God came to Moses because he loved his people, God adapts his plans for us out of love and care. That in God's infinite mercy, God adapts plans so that we are still with him. That even when we are too stubborn to recognize the path God has for us, God is still with us. Each and every day God adapts so that we may still know he is God, and we may know that we are loved. So let us remember that the choice is ours and let us choose to follow the God that has shown us such great mercy, and let us adapt ourselves to God's great love. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – God Can

Our current series is a look at the ways that God is a part of our lives, and all that God can do. We will spend five weeks exploring the ways that God acts. In them, we will see the ways God responds to us and how we can respond to God.

October 23rd – *God Adapts* – Exodus 3:7-12; 4:1-17

October 30th – *God Hears* – 2 Kings 20:1-7; Luke 11:5-13

November 6th – *God Unites* – Ephesians 1:11-23; John 17:11-24

November 13th – *God Loves* – Zephaniah 3:14-20; Romans 5:1-11

November 20th – *God Provides* – 1 Chronicles 29:9-18; Matthew 11:25-30

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew		Eric Veach	Ed & Verna Titus
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Tricia Adkins
Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart	Phyllis Gabel
Sage Martin	Dalton McFarland	Ruth Ann Finley	Jodie Bunch
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor	Family of Susie Callahan
Kenny Holmes	Chuck Hogan	Brittany Gilbert	Jackie Potter
Jeremy Klinger	Phil Hawickhorst	Ray Carr	Family of Tracy Huddleston
Family of Mary Bayless	Jane Williams	Alice Sherwood	Dean Carlen
Ross Maddison	Family of Sue Comer	Richard Durham	Carol Miller
Kyle Lehman	Kathy Hanks	Family of Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd
Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson	Nick & Leana Ochoa
Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Kristen & Zach Morecraft	Greg Williams	Martha Roberts
Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte		

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