**Exodus 3:2** There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.

 Seriously, this has got to be one of the most famous of the Bible histories to be found. I’ll bet that most people know about “Moses and the Burning Bush.”

 But are you sure you know this history? Oh, I am going to guess you know the story, but have you given thought to the implications and to the wonder of what this history tells us about God and our lives? For instance, let me just ask you this. It is clear that Moses was to be God’s servant and that from the beginning of his life God had clearly chosen Moses for something special and unique. Did you notice how it was not Moses who sought out God but rather it was God who found Moses? Moses ended up in Midian because he had not acted in a Godly and right way. Yet that whole part of his life was going to end up being a training period for when he would lead the Israelites out of Egypt. And when God knew that Moses was sufficiently trained, now here is God revealing himself to Moses, offering Himself before Moses so that Moses really had no choice but to go and see this great sight, this bush burning and yet not being burned up. Not Moses seeking God but finally God seeking out Moses, God moving in Moses life, God bringing everything to be so that what Moses is to do and be is fully and finally done.

 So if that has piqued your interest, let’s you and I learn a few more things about this awesome history of God working and moving in our world. Our theme will be: **OUR UNIQUE GOD.**

 Needless to say I think we have to pay attention to just how this history got going. Here is Moses out tending the flocks of his Father-in-law Jethro and when he looks up he sees something. At first I think he just saw this glow, this bright glow and as he drew closer and closer it was then that Moses realized it was a bush, a thorn bush, that looked like it was on fire but it couldn’t have been, because that bush was not being burnt up, you know, the way things usually work in the world. So Moses draws closer and when he does, clearly and concisely the bush, well, a voice speaks to him from that bush.

 **“Moses, Moses!”** Please note that God, the true God knows exactly who Moses is. He knows his name and I can pretty well tell you he knows everything there is to know about Moses. He knows Moses is an Israelite. That’s why God says to him, **“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.”** Please note that God declares “I am!” I AM the God of your Father. That tells us a lot right there. This is the God Moses had no doubt learned about as he was being raised by his mother for Pharaoh’s daughter. God identifies himself as the very God that Moses had learned about and that Moses no doubt at one time worshiped.

 And then note that God tells him, **“I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”** People, you do realize that these people, these men mentioned have been dead, earthly speaking, for 400 years? Yet God says **I AM** their God. Although these men had left this world centuries before God was still their God, God still spoke as if these men still were! Did you know that Jesus quoted these words of His Father when speaking with the Sadducees about their false belief that there was no resurrection? Jesus quoted these very words of God and says, **“He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”**

 I sure hope you get the point of how God speaks. To me these are words of hope and comfort. These are words of promise and joy because these words tell us that when we depart this life, we do not cease, but rather through and by the grace of God we go to be with Him in his Heavenly Kingdom. In other words, there is life after death in this world. There is a heaven where God takes us to be with Him forever and ever. Oh, and one more thing. Did you know that Jesus in John 8, in his day, said of Abraham, **“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”** Make no mistake. God is the God of the living and not the dead.

 Please note that as Moses approaches this bush that God tells him **“take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”** So, do you think sandals could make something unholy? Do think what we wear or what we do could impact that which is holy, especially when that holiness is of and from God himself? If you are like me, you recognize that we can have no impact on the holiness of God. That ground was holy because God was there at the moment. That command by God was not given because there was some sort of magical property in Moses’ sandals that would have ended the holiness. God has Moses remove his sandals for no other reason than that Moses grasp, Moses understand in this simple act the who and what he is before.

 If you are confirmed in the Lutheran faith you learned this truth in another way. In our Catechism Luther so wonderfully writes this truth when speaking of the point and meaning of the First Petition of the Lord’s Prayer. Remember the petition: **“Hallowed be your name.”** Of this we humbly learned: **“God’s name is certainly holy by itself, but we pray in this petition that we too may keep it holy.”** You and I have no impact on the actual holiness and purity of God. We cannot add to his holiness or subtract from it. We cannot influence his will or his way so that God should do what we want. God is God. He is holy and pure. He is above and beyond anything we could know or imagine when it comes to his power, wisdom and love. The only thing we can do when it comes to God’s holiness is bring disgrace and shame on God’s name in this world of men because we do not behave and act like the children of God we are to be. In the culture of Moses, removing your sandals was a sign of deep honor and respect for the one before you and that’s all God was calling upon Moses to do. It is a simple lesson to you and I that we are to have the same respect and honor for God in our lives too. Only our culture doesn’t really have a set method of displaying that honor and respect we have. Yet I will tell you that such is one of the reasons for worship and for church. It is, regardless of your culture, a wonderful and awesome sign of your respect and honor for God! Think about that the next time you are going to casually miss church. And I also want you to think about what might have happened to Moses had he responded to God’s request with a “I am not taking my sandals off for you….who do you think you are,” attitude. Just some food for thought there.

 Then notice the wonderful exchange between Moses and God. God is willing to help the doubting and fearful Moses in the task he is giving him. When Moses says, **“Who am I, that I should go...”** it is a great question, and in reality a rather humble statement of fact. But God is patient with Moses. Did you catch God’s response? I love the answer. There is no, “Now Moses, you are a good man and you have many talents. Your personality is upbeat and wonderful and you are, with all your abilities, the only reason the job gets done!” I think you get what I am driving at. In essence God pretty much let’s Moses know he isn’t qualified, that he really brings nothing of value to the endeavor God is going to send him on. God pretty much agrees with Moses that there are better qualified people than him BUT God makes one big distinction and one big point that makes Moses the man who is to go. And that point and distinction has nothing to do with Moses. God says, **“I will be with you!”**

You are to go and you are to do this because I, the true and almighty God am going to be with you. I am going to direct you, give you the wisdom, give you the knowledge, give you the power, and give you anything else you will need to get this job done. I will lead you and you will not fail to accomplish what I want. How absolutely wonderful these words of God. This isn’t about you Moses! It is about Me, the Lord and that’s all you need to know!

 I can’t help but think there are a lot of people in our world, even within the Christian Church who should learn and grasp the truth of these words. Paul got it. He called himself the chief of sinners and totally unworthy of the call and job God gave him. Paul recognized that it was the power and wonder, the grace and love of God that was and is always the difference in the work of God. I can’t begin to tell you the number of times I have heard Pastors, my fellow WELS pastors, bemoan the inadequacy of who they are for what they are doing. It is not false humility they are displaying but a true acknowledgement that without God’s power, God’s grace and love working through the Word and sacraments they administer nothing godly and good could be. I have one dear Pastor friend who has said more than once about his own children, ”If it were just up to me, I could raise children only for hell and damnation but because of my Savior and his gracious love and gospel, I have children who belong to the Lord.” Yeah, this question and answer strikes every shepherd of God’s flock….Who am I! The answer is always the same. You are nothing, but I, the Lord your God and Savior, will be with you!”

 I do want you to notice that Moses still is filled with doubt and fear, and that is why, despite God’s gracious promise to be with him he says, **“Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘the God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”** What a great answer God gives.

 **“God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” This is what you are to say to the Israelites; ‘I am has sent me to you!”** I have always chaffed at this way of translating what God says here. It is true, proper and right grammatical rules say this is the best translation but I still say no. I believe this should simply be translated **I am I AM!** That’s why the next sentence says, **“I am has sent me to you!”** This is the wonderful and powerful name of God. This is the name that tells us God always is, always was and always will be. This is the name that tells us God is unchangeable and eternal, gracious and kind, loving and caring. This is the name of God associated with forgiveness and God moving for our eternal and spiritual good in all things. In Exodus 34 God himself tells us what this name means when he says, **“The Lord, the Lord the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”** This is who and what our God is!

 And if you really want to drive home all the more the wonder of this name, then you need to grasp this simple fact. When Jesus was discussing who and what he was before the Jewish religious leaders as recorded in John 8, he clearly and wonderfully makes this statement, **“I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!”** These men were so upset with Jesus that they wanted to kill him right then and there! Why? Because Jesus had just declared himself God! Jesus had just given himself the name “I am.” In other words, you need to clearly grasp and see that the God of the burning bush and the God on the cross are one and the same. He is what counts. He is the one in charge. He is the one who calls and saves, who grants eternal life and salvation by grace through faith. He is the one who makes us His children and calls upon us to serve Him in our broken, sinful ways. He is the one who is with us and who makes our filthy rag acts perfect and holy before His Father and ours. He is Jesus our Lord and Savior, the Son of God who died for our sins and was raised again for our forgiveness and life. Jesus is exactly and absolutely the great **I AM**!

 Honestly, there is more to say about this text and what it reveals to us, but we have run out of time. As God was with Moses, as God caused his birth, formed him, trained him, called him and lead him to serve, I tell you so God is with us still today! He is still at work in our lives to bring us to him and to have us serve Him. Do you understand? The great I am is Jesus. Jesus who says to us, **“I am the Way, the Life, the Good Shepherd, the Door, the Vine, the King, the Light and the Word.”** Jesus is our everything for now and always. Amen.