

“The Cosmic Soul: The Sacred”
Exodus 3:1-12

In his book *Beauty, Wonder, and Belonging*, James Conlon shares a haunting observation. While going to the YMCA, he noticed four teenagers sleeping on the street near the post office. They were unhoused, invisible to the rushing crowds.

Conlon found himself asking a piercing question: “How can this happen in a society where overeating fuels a multi-billion dollar weight-loss industry?” He suggests that the reason we feel incapable of housing the homeless or feeding the hungry isn’t a lack of money - it’s because we ourselves are **starved**. We are starved for an experience that can nourish our hearts. Conlon asks: “If we could satisfy our deep desire for the Divine and feel at home in the Universe, would we not then have the inner abundance to house and feed those in need?”

When we are spiritually empty, we hoard. We build walls. We succumb to the "Scarcity Myth" - the lie that there isn't enough love, enough space, or enough resources to go around. But when we encounter the **Sacred**, that myth shatters.

Our Bible story today introduces us to a man who was the definition of "soul-starved." Before Moses was a leader, he was an outlaw. He was a fugitive fleeing a murder charge. He had grown up in the halls of power, but now he was a refugee in the desert, tending someone else's sheep. He was a man trying to be invisible, trying to stay out of trouble just to survive.

But it all changed when he had a mystical encounter on a mountain. Let’s watch an introduction to this story from the Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/videos/exodus-1-18/>.

Let’s listen to Exodus 3:1-12: Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness and came to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. ²There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ³Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up.” ⁴When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” ⁵Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy

ground.”⁶ He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ 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,⁸ 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.⁹ The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them.¹⁰ Now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”¹² 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.”

Notice that the bush was already burning before Moses looked. The Sacred is always present, but the miracle only happens when Moses "turns aside." He interrupts his schedule. He allows himself to be interrupted by wonder.

God's response to Moses isn't just a "spiritual high." It is a call to action. God says: “I have observed the misery of my people... I have heard their cry... I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them.”

The Sacred is not a retreat *from* the world; it is an immersion *into* the heart of the world's pain. When Moses asks, "Who am I that I should go?" he is speaking from his "Small Self"—the outlaw, the stutterer, the failure. But God answers from the "Cosmic Self": **"I will be with you."**

As Teilhard de Chardin once suggested in his "Cosmic Liturgy," everything is "Holy Matter." The bush was just a common desert shrub, but when it was set ablaze by the Divine, it became an altar. You are just a human being, but when you are set ablaze by compassion, you become the place where God "comes down" to deliver others.

To bridge the gap between Moses's mountain and our own experiences of suffering, let us hear these words from John Roedel:

Me: The world is completely out of control!

God: I know. It's such an adventure, right?

Me: No! It's like being on a runaway train! I need to feel like I am in control of my life.

God: You want to be in control?

Me: Yes!

God: You are living on a spinning wet rock of a planet that resides next to a constantly exploding fireball in the middle of an ever-expanding universe that is filled with mysteries beyond your wildest imagination.

Me: Um, okay....

God: And on this planet that you are hurtling through the great expanse in - you are coexisting with billions of other people who have free-will and their own experiences that shape their perspectives and beliefs.

Me: Yeah...?

God: And while all this is going on your soul is residing in a physical body that is such a miracle of delicate engineering that at any given moment could produce its last heartbeat.

Me: Right...

God: What is it about your existence that you think you have any control of?

Me: Um...

God: Come on - you know the answer to this. What can you control?

Me: How kind I am to people?

God: Yep and one other thing.

Me: What's that?

God: How kind you are to yourself. Aside from that - most of everything else is a bit outside of your design.

Me: This is a bit terrifying...

God: All great adventures are!

The Sacred in a Lost Doll

This "witnessing" of the sacred is beautifully illustrated in a story about the writer **Franz Kafka**. It is a story of human kindness and connection at their best!

At 40, Kafka was walking through a park in Berlin when he met a little girl crying because she had lost her doll. Instead of walking by, Kafka "turned aside." He searched with her, and when they couldn't find it, he did something radical: he entered into her grief: https://youtu.be/Wd_qI77ydaqM.

He told the girl the doll wasn't lost - she was just traveling. For weeks, Kafka wrote letters from the doll, detailing her adventures in far-off lands. He used the "inner abundance" of his imagination to house a child's broken heart.

When he finally brought her a replacement doll, the girl noted it looked different. Kafka handed her a final letter: "My travels have changed me." Kafka died shortly after, but years later, the girl found a tiny note tucked inside the doll's dress. It read: "Everything you love will probably be lost, but in the end, love will return in another way."

Whether we are standing before a burning bush or a crying child in a park, we are standing on **Holy Ground**.

The "Scarcity Myth" tells us we don't have enough time for those in need or enough energy for the grieving. But the "Cosmic Soul" knows that we are connected to a wellspring of abundance that never runs dry.

May you have the courage this week to **turn aside**. May you remove the sandals of your ego and your fear. And may you find that love always returns - not always in the way we expected, but always in the way we need. **Amen**.