

TELL GOD YOUR PLANS**Exodus 2:11-3:22**

Intro: I never appreciated Woody Allen much but a famous quote of his is “*If you want to make God laugh, tell Him about your plans.*” He is Jewish by birth and probably not devout at all, but he probably derived his view of God’s laughter from a Yiddish proverb: “*We plan, God laughs.*” I do believe God has a sense of humor and there is lots of evidence for that, most of all because it can and often is redemptive and much needed. But, while this saying has a ring of truth to it, it also implies that God belly laughs at the plans of his highest creation. The point of what I’m saying here and the reason for my title is, we can have what Robert Burns described as the best-laid plans of mice and men, but if they are not the plans God has they will go awry. Why? Because they are not his plans and it’s good they’re not.

In 1978 I was making plans to get a degree in Archeology from The University of New Mexico. Ostensibly I planned to make my concentration in the area of anthropology with the intent of using it for missions. It appeared to be, or so I hoped, a noble plan. But the truth was I was running from a calling on my life from my earliest remembrance. That calling was pastoral ministry.

I also had plans to find a wife in New Mexico. You see, I’d had a failed (THANKS BE TO GOD!!!!) 2,000 mile relationship with a Pennsylvania girl and my new plan, in my mind’s eye, was a dark-eyed, black haired beauty of pure Spanish extraction, who, by the way, had not yet presented herself to me.

But God had other plans. I was best man for my best friend’s wedding . . . in Pennsylvania . . . and we were at the rehearsal and his soon to be sister in law came walking down the aisle and my plans changed. She was a Pennsylvania girl but she was the best one God ever made and he made her for me. Short story long, my plans changed. My run into the wilds of the sunny southwest was redirected to the plan God had for me all along. The rest is history. I married that girl two years later and three months after that I began my first pastoral ministry posting.

Tell God your plans – and then watch what he does.

Moses had plans. He was privileged and impetuous and compassionate all at the same time. His calling involved a run into the desert too but it was quite a bit different from mine. Listen,

(Read Exodus 2:11-3:22)

Tell God your plans Moses. . .

Right out of the gate Moses’s plan failed

- Moses had such a good heart. He might have been raised in an Egyptian palace as the son of an Egyptian princess, but he was an Israelite in his core being and he knew it. He was full of compassion for the plight of his persecuted people and he acted on it as he looked both ways and killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew. He didn’t know it yet – because he had not become acquainted with the God of his ancestors – or he may have done what F.B. Meyer suggests, “*Instead of looking this way and that, he must look upward.*”
- But he didn’t and it backfired. He also didn’t plan on his act in the aid of the Hebrew to be misconstrued by the Hebrews. He had a lot to learn. Deliverance doesn’t come from brute strength or violence so Moses’s first attempt was a failure because, plain and simply, he tried to do it on his own. It seemed like a good idea at the time – but it fell on its face.
- And Pharaoh, the successor of his adoptive grandfather heard about it and put a price on Moses’s head. And Moses headed for the desert of Sinai. Moses ran and he ran far; all the way to land of Midian. He needed to travel far to get away from the long arm of the law, which was the hand of Pharaoh – the major power in the region. And besides, if even his own people, Hebrews, didn’t see his value, he needed to get away to where no one knew who he was.
- The thing is . . .

You can run, but you cannot hide

- No one knew who this Egyptian was who was as he was sitting by the Midianite well so Moses finally felt safe. But God knew where he was. You can’t get away from God – ask Jonah. And I’m wondering something about Moses, I’m wondering if he didn’t like the solitude of the wilderness anyway. I think if he would have taken a Myers-Briggs Personality Profile he would have been an introvert. I was so curious

about this that I Googled “What was Moses on the Myers-Briggs and voila! There is was, someone got him to sit down and take the test and they discovered that he was ISFP (Introverted, Sensing, Feeling, Perceiving). And then they said this “*This suggests Moses was an aesthetic soul and a silent observer.*” I agree. I think Moses was what Sheila calls “Peopled Out” and he was enjoying his time alone. Boy! Did he have a change coming . . .

- And then, it happens every time, a girl came along. Well, actually, seven of them. All the daughters of the Priest of Midian, Reuel, otherwise known as Jethro. And they were being harassed by some bully shepherds who were preventing them from watering their flock of sheep. Moses’s compassion flared again, but not with the murderous results he’d employed in Egypt, and he rescued the girls and their flock. And short story long, Moses married one of those girls and this Hebrew with Egyptian training from the highest courts of the land, became a shepherd in the middle of nowhere – right where he wanted to be – remember – he’s an ISFP.
- But Moses was learning. The wilderness is good for that. Later Hebrews would find the same like David and Elijah and Paul and eventually me. The Wilderness is a great place to learn about yourself and about God and what he plans for you. F. B. Meyer wrote, “*The learning of Egypt was not sufficient to equip Moses for his life work. He is taken to the solitudes of the wilderness. That is God's college. All who have done the greatest work in the world have graduated there.*”
- Forty years later, Moses was a different man. In Egypt he acted with impulsive violence, and he had learned much since then, and he had mostly learned about himself. And then came God’s call and it radically changed Moses’s plans.
- This is because . . .

God hears. God sees. God knows. God acts

- Moses’s compassion didn’t come close to God’s compassion. He heard the anguished suffering of the Israelites, his chosen people and because of that, his hearing, seeing, and knowing, brought action.
- God also remembered his covenants with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is because God doesn’t forget. He remembers his promises to the people of Israel. He remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and his covenant through Jesus Christ. And here is a huge take away for today: We can count on the fact that he remembers his promises to us. Paul told the Corinthians that God’s promises are yes and amen (KJV) or as my Bible says, *For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.* 2 Corinthians 1:20 (ESV).
- God had a plan and Moses was a key part of that plan. So Moses’s seminary of solitude had a graduation day that included a burning bush. But his career plans took some persuasion and fortunately God is good at that.
- Notice that Moses was curious about the burning bush and went to check it out. This is impressive. I think I would have been a bit afraid of such a phenomenon. But then again, Moses was a lone shepherd in the wilderness and that makes for a tough man. This soft Egyptian with a passion for justice and a compassion for the underdog had become toughened and he was ready for God’s plan for the people of Israel.
- But when God spoke and revealed himself – Moses, tough as he was, knew when he was in the presence of holiness. He hid his face.
- Then God gave him the plan. Moses would lead the Hebrews from Egypt to the Promised Land. And Moses gulped and asked, “*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?*” Exodus 3:11. And God didn’t tell him who Moses was – he just told him that he would be with Moses and he told him who he was.
- Here is who God is . . .

God IS

- Yep – God just is. Here is what he told Moses when Moses inquired of whom it was that was sending him? You see, the Hebrews would surely ask, “Who is this God of our ancestors” and you tell them, “*I am who I am. Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.*” Exodus 3:14.
- God is I AM – always has been and always will be. That is the one who sent Moses and who he still is, because he just always has been. Because of that Moses had all he needed. And that’s all we need.

- But Moses needed some further convincing and we often do too when God changes our plans. But he's good for doing what he says he will do – because of his promises. So, as one of my commentators put it, *“There should be no shrinking when God says I am. Fill in this blank. Check with whatever you need for life or godliness, and God will do that and more also, with exceeding abundance.”*
- I'm going to wrap this up here because we are going to continue to look further at Moses's call next week. In the meantime, think about his call on your life. How does it line up with your plans? He's got a call on each and every one of us and it's just as crucial as leading Israelites from Egypt. This is because each of us has a call to lead anguished souls to the Promised Land.
- Tell God your plans, but make sure they line up with his. Amen.