

## **The Great I AM, 8-30-20**

We place a lot in titles today. We call people names both formally and as friends. A title defines one's role in the world and should be used especially in a professional setting. Our pastors these days lighten it up a bit, as I do, with just the title and first name. I do it due to my lengthy last name. Others do it to also bear a more friendly title to their congregants and less formal. Others insist on only being called by their proper and given surnames. Few doctors go by Dr and a first name, and many still prefer their proper names and titles, except for pediatricians because we want children to like their doctors. God has a pretty simple title – I AM. I am who though may be the question one would ask if presented with that title. Who we are is defined in many ways, and not just the title says it all. Many doctors have the title, but their advice may not be correct for every patient they label with a certain illness. Some of us switch doctors because the one we have just doesn't understand our needs and concerns. Having someone professional to talk to is a good thing, and the professional person needs to keep that clearly in their minds in order to properly do their jobs. Pastors can be friendly with their congregants but must remain a certain distance and use proper judgement when among their many parishioners. God always found someone to handle his earthly affairs or at least to be the first contact people had with Him as the true source of the information. So, it was for a simple man named Moses.

We met Moses as an infant, saved from the Nile River by an Egyptian princess who raised him in the palace, and he wanted for nothing. Yet, as Moses grew, he realized his true identity as a Jewish man and not an Egyptian, and upon seeing the cruelty of the Egyptians, especially the overseers made a difficult decision one day. It was a decision that would cost him greatly later in life. It was one although he put aside, God never forgot. God is great and God is good, but God never forgets our actions. He does allow forgiveness. Moses when we meet him again here in the book of Exodus is a very simple shepherd, working for his father in law Jethro who was the priest of Midian. Moses was not a priest, and all he did was being a shepherd to his father in law's flock. It was a simple life, and Moses seemed content.

Funny how life just gets comfortable, when God decides to stir it up a bit. I know from my personal experience incredible changes occur when God call us. He may not call us in the way the Bible characters were called, but it is still a calling, the voice we cannot resist, the notion we cannot get out of our heads, and the strong pull being made sometimes in an unknown direction. Moses was going to be called by God, and his future would change dramatically. Moses ran from Egypt when he killed an overseer who was whipping an Israelite slave because his anger grew. We get angry too, but hopefully have been able to still our anger. Yet, God had work for even Moses, who committed what would be listed as the number thing not to do in his future.

Now not all of us are born leaders. Many of us have to learn how to lead. We have to acquire certain skills, and some of us fail at it terribly. At times, we are challenged beyond what we feel we can handle. It was no different for Moses. God was about to change his life. Yet, it all started out as a regular day. Moses was doing his job, tending the sheep when suddenly his name was being called. Just like Isaac, Moses responded to God when he called him, and the response of Moses, a simple "Here I am".

God begins by telling Moses exactly who He is. Moses was so close to God right from the beginning, that he hid his face due to the glory of God and he was afraid. God told him he heard his people crying in their prayers to Him. He told him he was about to take action and that Moses was going to be his man on the ground. He was going to send Moses back to the very place he fled from to do his bidding. Most of us would at this point accept the words of God, but not Moses. Instead he begins to give God all the reasons he is not fit for the job. God of course had a response for every question Moses had, and in the end it was to tell them it is " I AM" who is sending you on His behalf and they will know me as the same God of all their ancestors before them. He says that this would be His title forever, and for all generations.

It is true that a title stays with a person even beyond death. It was very customary in the 1800's for a pastor to have the title Rev. engraved on their gravestone. A doctor who passes is still noted to have been a doctor in their obituaries. We place all

kinds of titles and descriptions on the stones describing the deceased, from loving mother to friend and perhaps a professional title as well. God has a simple one, "I AM". We never really use it though today. In fact, it would be quite odd for one to refer to God as I AM in a service or other time we spoke of God. God had many other names as well, from Yah-Weh, the great Comforter, the Father, Lord, and all mean the same deity. In fact, one website I Googled gave 955 different names all as names and titles for our God. No matter what His name, we know who He is.

Moses was about to embark on a great journey. It was indeed life altering. His family life would change dramatically. Yet he would never be alone. Not only would God give him his own older brother, Aaron, who stayed his whole life with the Israelites being born before the great killing of infants which occurred when Moses was born; but God would enable Moses to do things unheard of, unthought of, and definitely things no one else was ever capable of doing. When God calls us, we can do things we never thought we could do before. He changes our lives and sometimes we don't understand the changes which come with believing in Him. At times, we feel tormented, forgotten and alone, separated from God. Yet, God remains the same. He is still "I am". When he told Moses tell them "I am who I am", it sounds confusing to say the least. Yet, at times are not we just exactly who we always were but perhaps enhanced?

Our doctors are still people, who themselves need physicians. Our pastors are still people who have ups and downs, feelings of loss and loneliness, and yet bear the sorrows of many. Moses would be their pastor, their leader, their father on earth. He would never leave them and here again, we see God choosing one with the background of a shepherd. He would in the future choose other shepherds to lead. He would choose David, a young shepherd boy. His Son would come to earth to shepherd the people. He would honor the shepherds guarding their sheep near Bethlehem by allowing them to be the first to hear the news that the Christ child was born and to make their visitation to him before any other groups. Shepherds are tough, strong, diligent, and caring. They search endlessly for their lost sheep, even just one.

When we feel lost, we need to know we have the Great Shepherd, God, just another name for I AM, looking out for us. He guides us back to the fold, if that fold is our family, our homes, or our professions. He does not allow us to be lost forever and does not give up on us. We give up on God, but he will never give up on us. When you think about your earthly title, be it an easy one like mother or father, or one that seems more challenging such as physician, attorney, reverend, know that all titles remain with you in some way your entire lives. Mothers are always a mother and fathers always a father. Even a retired doctor would come to the aide of a fallen person in need of help. Ministers never give up preaching, even if it is just in the end to their own families. We carry our titles with us, and we hope to use them to His glory, not ours. We need to recognize the gifts within us that have made us attain the titles we are given. We may have had many excuses not to continue with our careers, but in the end, it is God who decides for us what course we will take. Moses was still going to be guarding the sheep, but now they would have two legs and talk back.

No matter what you do in life, remain true to the greatest leader, I am, the great I am as we also refer to God. Remain open to his suggestions, his pulling, his prodding, his pushes he gives us to do his will. God knows what we are thinking, feeling, and tries to help us all the time, but we have to listen. We, like Moses, will have excuses for not following his demands, but in the end, we need to make the choice. God gave us free will and he doesn't give up on any of us. Listen for God's voice. Heed his commands. Live your life to its fullest, but never forget those words God gave to Moses to identify himself "I am who I am". Just be who you are but also be who God wants you to be. Amen.

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