

Exodus 3:1-6
Ephesians 2:19-22
Creekside COB
November 21, 2004

“Holy Ground”
Ginny Haney – Guest Speaker

I don't recall exactly how old I was, but I was old enough to be left alone in the house for a short period of time. It was Advent time and we had been lighting the candles on our advent wreath as a family each week. Since no one else was around, I got it into my head to light the candles on my own. I got out the box of matches and lit one. I then lit each of the candles on the wreath. By then, the match was burning down to the end and as it touched my finger, I dropped the match. The lit match landed in the full box of matches. Do you know what happens when you drop a lit match into a full box of matches? Flame literally exploded from the box. In that instant of panic, I went tearing through the house, out the front door, and threw the burning box of matches into a snow bank behind a bush. I covered the entire box with snow to put out the flame and buried it as deep as I could to hide the evidence. I don't recall my parents ever questioning what happened to the box of matches, nor do I remember if I thought to retrieve the match box when the snow melted.

The bush I hid the burning box of matches behind fortunately didn't catch fire. At the worst, I'm lucky that I didn't burn the house down. At the least, I'm lucky I didn't feel the burn on the seat of my pants. I do remember living in fear of being found out. Do you suppose my almost “burning bush” experience came close to the one Moses had? God did not call out to me from the bush, but I would guess that if my parents had found out about the episode, the booming of my father's voice may have sounded as though God were calling. It may have sounded something like this, “Virginia Kay, Virginia Kay, come here! I am your father and you are in big trouble!” I am quite sure I would

have hid my face because I would have been afraid to look at my father because of what I had done.

Moses was afraid to look at God. In that day, the people thought if they saw God's face, they would die. But even when Moses realized he was not going to die, he argued with God. He felt unworthy of what God was asking him to do. "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" This is another point that Moses and I had in common. I was around 30 years of age when I first felt God calling me into ministry. God called me from within the bush, outside the bush, under the bush, and behind the bush. I hid my face. I argued. "Who am I that you should ask me to do this?" God became angry at Moses and said, "Oh, all right, I'll let your brother help you." I don't think God was angry at me for not listening – at least I've never heard him call me Virginia – it's always been Ginny when I heard God calling. But I am quite sure he has shaken his head in disappointment on more than one occasion.

God has called persons at different times for different things – that is evident in the Bible. Samuel was a boy when he first heard God's calling. He was fearful of the vision he had in the night and was even afraid to tell Eli about it. Josiah was eight years old when he became King of Judah. In spite of the fact that his grandfather and father had been wicked kings, Josiah did what was right in the sight of the Lord and reigned for thirty-one years. A lot of good things happened during the reign of Josiah, but I find it hard to believe that an eight-year-old boy wouldn't be scared to death at the thought of being king of a country. Mary was a teen when God called her to be mother to Jesus. It's not difficult to imagine how frightened she must have been at being unwed and pregnant, let alone with the Messiah.

At the other end of the spectrum, Abraham and Sarah were in their nineties when God called them to bear a son. Sarah laughed when she learned of this plan. Elizabeth was also considered beyond child-bearing age when she learned she was to bear John. Zechariah questioned God and was struck mute. Noah didn't argue with God, but it's seems likely to me that he would be fearful of the task he was called to do, especially since

he was six-hundred years old when the flood waters came upon the earth. The common thread in all of these stories is that each of these individuals eventually did what God asked them to do. And not one of them was deserted by God in the midst of their obedience. The important thing is that what these people did had far reaching effect on others and because of it, you and I are here today. Their actions were noteworthy enough to make it into the “Who’s Who of Bible Characters.”

I DID, also, eventually, agree to follow what God called me to do. It doesn’t mean that I wasted my life prior to that, although I did wonder about that for a long time. I have recently been made aware how the tapestry of my life has woven together to bring me to where I am. I’m sure you all have put jig-saw puzzles together before. Don’t you usually begin with the corner pieces and the straight-edged pieces? You choose the pieces that you are sure of where they go first and build as much of the frame around the picture as you can. Then you work from there. The rest of the pieces come together by finding like colors and shapes. But very often, the pieces just kind of come together. That is how I view my life from this perspective. The frame was put together first. That part, I view as God building the framework for me to work from. The same thing is true with building a house – you can’t start from the middle and work out and expect it to hold together. You have to build the foundation first, then the frame. From that, you can then attach the inner structure to it. As the rest of the pieces have been put into place in my life, the picture is becoming more clear. Not all the pieces are in, yet. And I don’t expect that will happen in this lifetime. But, if you’re like me, when you work on a jigsaw puzzle, it’s hard to stop. You want to keep going so you can see what the finished picture is like.

OK – this next part is for Betty. If the rest of you want to take your Sunday snooze now, go right ahead. But you are welcome to listen in. Betty, you have shared that our “calling” stories are similar. You also told me recently that the thing that scares you most about this calling was the licensing. And I would say that you are right where you should be. You are obviously in good biblical company. Who in their right mind would not be afraid of

facing the burning bush? I have two “life-isms” as I will call them that I tend to live by (my spell check didn’t like this word, so I must have made it up). The first is: “The sooner you get behind, the longer you have to catch up.” And the second is: “God does not call the equipped, he equips the called.” This has never been more evident to me than in the past 2 years. It seems as soon as I learn something in a class, I have opportunity to use it: right away!! This has happened over and over.

Betty, God has called you. And God has equipped you. The pieces may not all be in the puzzle, yet, but they are all on the table. All you need to do is look for the right one at the time you need it and it will be there. The important thing is that you willingly took your sandals off to place yourself on Holy Ground. The important thing is to keep claiming the light, and you yourself will become more radiant.

OK – the rest of you can listen again. How many of you have seen the movie, “Raiders of the Lost Ark”? Indiana Jones is searching for the Ark of the Covenant. He has in his possession a gold medallion that is supposed to lead him to the Ark. The medallion is about this big with a hole in the middle. In an underground crypt, there is a miniature version of a city. All Indiana has to do is place the medallion on the proper sized pole, stick it in the ground and at just the right time the sun will shine through the hole directly onto the spot where the Ark is. He does, it does and he finds the Ark.

At the beginning of the movie, the German villain tries to retrieve this medallion from a burning building, picks it up while it is hot and the imprint of the medallion is burned right onto his hand. The persons who are opposing Indiana Jones are using this burned on imprint to look for the Ark. What they are not realizing is that the imprint is reversed and they are looking in the wrong place!! When the Ark is finally opened, Indiana Jones tells the heroine not to look at the Ark. The villains are so awestruck by the beauty of the images that come out of the Ark that they look at it and melt away into nothing – they virtually self destructed.

This analogy was presented to me recently by a woman in a small group I meet with. She used the light shining through the medallion as a way to describe a woman she knew that just emanated God's love and God's light. As this light shone through her, it led others to God. My mind then took it further to illustrate the villains looking in the wrong place because the image was backwards. I could hardly sit still to share this until she was finished speaking. It seemed to be a truly holy moment as we put it all together. I'm sure this came to me so easily because I have looked in the wrong places so many times. It is far too tempting to look at the pretty images of life and not realize that they may cause us to self destruct.

When we are willing to place ourselves on Holy Ground, the light shines at the right place at the right time and we can do amazing things!! The pieces of the puzzle all fit together. But, when we get it backwards, when we try to build the frame from the inside out, we get the pieces in all the wrong places and run the risk of not ever getting the puzzle put together.

I also included the passage from Ephesians this morning for a couple of reasons. It may seem familiar to you because it has been used by your Cornerstone Committee and was printed on the timeline you received a couple of weeks ago. Let's read it again to refresh our memories; it is printed in your bulletin at the bottom of the page with the song "Holy Ground" on it: "You are no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all – irrespective of how we got here – in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day – a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home."

Betty, you are a member of God's Holy family, just like Moses, Abraham, Noah and Mary were. You belong here. Your cornerstone has been laid and God lives by his spirit in you. This day is your Holy Ground. You have chosen to publicly

declare your willingness to re-consecrate your life from this point forward. It is now up to you to allow the light to shine through you to point the way for others to God.

The rest of you – the members of Creekside Church of the Brethren – most of you were not called in the same way that Betty was. But, you too, are on Holy Ground. God has laid the foundation. You are the stones that make up the framework. God lives by his spirit in you here on County Road 10. But THIS is also your Holy Ground. God will continue to live in you on County Road 113 in the not so distant future. As the pieces of the puzzle for your new building come together, you will be able to see the whole picture. The Cornerstone will be laid and soon after will follow a sanctuary, Christian Education rooms, rooms for fellowship and much, much, more. But you must be willing to take off your sandals to stand on Holy Ground – to re-consecrate yourselves to BE the sanctuary for the living God; to BE the dwelling where God lives by his Spirit – “a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.” AMEN