

Holy Ground

This message was preached by Pastor Dan Lindsey on October 9, 2011.

This was the first sermon in the new church sanctuary.

The text was Acts 7:33.

We are in Acts chapter 7, and we are going to begin reading verse 29 this morning. Usually on Sunday mornings we have been traveling through the book of Acts. This is not really part of that journey. We are going to back up and go into the middle of the message that Stephen preached one time, and we are in Acts chapter 7 verse 29.

Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God Of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? The same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush."

Moses had been a shepherd for forty years. Hiding out in a desert land, he was now eighty years old, and God was not finished with Moses. On a particular day, Moses noticed a bush on fire. Now that was something that happened from time to time out in the desert, but as he watched this bush burn -- it wasn't burning up, and this caught his attention.

So he moves in to see what is going on with this bush and he hears the voice of God speak, and God's voice said to him to take his shoes off because he was standing on holy ground. I'm not going to take my shoes off today. I'll leave those on, but in the past when people worshiped the God of the Bible, basically in Old Testament times, they would take their shoes off. It was a sign of respect to God in the same way that a man might take his hat off when he goes into a church building. God was never to be approached flippantly or frivolously. He was always to be approached with awe and reverence. You see, as a person walked through life, as they walked through the world that week, the thing that picked up the most dirt in the world would be the shoes. As a sign that they were laying aside the dirt and the filth of the world that they picked up that week, they would take their shoes off to worship the Lord. It was also a kind of confession of sins because when they took their shoes off they were kind of admitting I did pick up some of the dirt of this world not only on my shoes but on my life, and, God, I want to be cleansed of that. I acknowledge that, and I confess my sins before you. So they took their shoes off. It was also a sign of humility, humbling themselves before an

awesome God. So Moses is out in the desert. He is not in a beautiful place of worship like we are this morning. He is just out watching sheep, and he sees this bush burning, and he was told by the voice of God to take his shoes off because “you are standing on holy ground.”

You might notice in the Bible there it says in Acts chapter 7 and verse 33, the last 2 words of the verse, “*holy ground.*” That is actually a quote from Exodus chapter 3 verse 5. We are not going to go back and read Exodus 3 today just for the sake of time, but in Exodus chapter 3 in verse 5 for the very first time in the Bible, we read the word “holy”. The word holy means set apart from the world unto God. Take your shoes off, Moses, because the ground that you are now on has been set apart from the world unto God. It’s holy ground. Now, what could cause a little piece of ground out in the desert, away from everybody, and away from everything to suddenly become holy ground or sanctified ground? Why was it any different than any other ground? What made that patch of property out there in the desert now holy ground?

I. The Presence of God

Number 1 today, it was because God was present there in a very real and tangible sense and in a way that you could sense Him, almost touch Him and you could certainly hear Him. He became visible in the burning bush. Now, we who are Christians know something about God. God is everywhere, and we can’t go anywhere that He is not. The Bible says in the book of Ephesians, chapter 1 verse 23, that He fills all and all. God is just everywhere. There is a beautiful Psalm, and let’s run through part of it today. The Psalmist asks in Psalm 139 verse 7, *Whither shall I go from thy spirit or whither shall I flee from thy presence?* Where could I go that God isn’t? Could I somehow, as Jonah did try, run away from God and think I could escape from the presence of God? Is that going to happen? Where could we go that God isn’t? The Psalmist says, *If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning --* have you ever gotten up in the morning, and you see the sun rising up and there are sunbeams shining through the clouds? If I could get on a sun beam, the wings of the morning, and I could go to the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand hold me. If I could go to the most distant place I could think of, travel across the ocean on a sunbeam, God would be there. God would be there to hold me, and to help me.

So God is really everywhere, and we can’t limit God to this room or any other room. But there are some places, some holy places, like that patch of ground out there in the desert where God met with Moses at the burning bush, where the glory of God’s presence is especially evident. In the Old Testament, a tabernacle and then later the temple, Solomon’s temple. You might remember the event, and glory of God was so real. The priests couldn’t even go in for a while because of the glory of God. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 5 verse 7, *But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.*

In the gospel of Matthew chapter 24 verse 15, Jesus called the temple the holy place. Here in Acts chapter 7 verse 34 notice what the Bible says, God says: *I have seen, I have seen*

the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. God says I have come down. I am especially present in this place and I am going to be especially present with you Moses. I'm going to go with you. I have a task for you to do. And that ground that Moses was on, a desert land that he traveled many times before, suddenly became holy ground because God was especially present there.

My prayer is this: that when we come into this place, this place set apart for God, that this would be holy ground, and that we would just sense the presence of God when we are here, and we would see God at work in each others' lives. And God at work in building His church here.

II. The Word of God

There is another reason that it was called holy ground, that little patch of ground out in the desert. Not only because God came down and God showed up that day, but because God's Word was presented there. In verse 31 Acts 7, *When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him.* At the place where Moses had never heard the voice of God, God begins to talk. On that little patch of ground out there in the desert where Moses was watching the sheep became holy ground because God, God was communicating.

Now, I hold in my hands a blessed book and when I open this book, this is holy ground, this is set apart ground for God. God is talking now as we open God's word, the Holy Bible. Romans chapter 1, last part of verse 1 first part of verse 2, the Bible is speaking of the Gospels: *Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.* We call it the Holy Bible, given by the Holy Spirit, from a holy God. A book different from all the other books in the world, inspired of the Holy Spirit. Holy Ground, holy scriptures. The Bible says: holy scriptures, Gods Word, the holy writings, the set apart writings, the holy book. *From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* Now not everybody here has had the opportunity from a child to be exposed to the Bible and to walk on the Holy Ground.....where you have the Bible, wow, what an honor! To have the Bible in your home, to have holy ground. If you have a Mom or a Dad that challenges you to be in the Word of God, you should thank God for that, that's holy ground.

Now we have come into this room today, and it is different. It is not like the white building that used to be here for 50 years, and it's not like the gym we met in, and it's different. I like it, don't you? Some things have changed, but there are some things that are not going to change, and one of those is the Bible, the Word of God. We are still going to, every service go to that holy ground, God's Word, and we are going to hear from Him, what God has to say. We remain committed to this blessed book that I hold up here this morning.

Hold your place here, if you would, and go with me to the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 23 -- *If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye*

are mad? I mean, if everybody was speaking different languages, and you didn't understand anything that was going on. and they were speaking in tongues or languages you don't understand, and somebody has one language and another person another language – how confusing! Notice what the next verse says: *But if all prophesy*, and prophesy is another word for giving out God's Word. In fact the Bible is called The Prophecy. *If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or is unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.* In other words, preach the Word, stay with the Bible, stay with God's Word, because even if people come in that don't know the Lord, they have no knowledge of the things of God, when God's Word is preached they become convinced of their sin, and their need to know God through Jesus Christ, the Savior. The Bible says that the desire would be that they fall down on their face and worship God. So you know God is here, God is in these people. So when we read God's Word, God is speaking to us, we are on holy ground whenever we open God's Word.

III. The Project of God

Something else happened on that patch of ground out there in the desert when Moses was just watching his sheep one day, that made that ground holy ground, and that is God's project, God's special task for Moses was announced there. In verse 34, the last part of the verse there, God says to Moses Acts 7:34: *And now come, I will send thee to Egypt.* The last part of the verse. He said I have a task for you, I'm sending you back to Egypt and you are going to go back, and you are going to deliver the Jewish people out of Egypt. You are going to go to Pharaoh, and you going to say "let my people go", and you are going to deliver hundreds of thousands Jewish people out of slavery. In verse 36, of course Stephen is summarizing this whole thing - condensing a big story in a few sentences here, and he said "*He brought them out.*" Moses was given a task to do on the holy ground and he went back. Things didn't seem so holy back there in Egypt. Moses talked to an unholy King, but he had a holy message from a holy God. At the age of eighty Moses meets God on holy ground, you have a task to do, as long as you are alive. God has a reason and a divine purpose for you being here to complete His task. Now, that was no little task for Moses, but it was no problem at all for God. Verse 34, the Bible says there (notice God's concern), *I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them.* God says, "I care about people. There are some slaves over there in Egypt that are suffering. I have seen it. I have heard it. I care. Moses, you may be out here in the back side of the desert, you may not care about them anymore. But I care about people and I want you to go out there and deliver them. I don't want you to ignore the situation anymore." And the land that Moses led the Jewish people out of was Egypt, and he led them to the promised land. Joshua later led them in, and so many things happened in that great promised land that it is now called the Holy Land.

You know what, in this place, this room right here, we are going to give you some tasks to do in God's word. We have a project. The project is not limited to this building; in fact, it is mostly outside of this building. You see, God says in His word that He is not willing that any

should perish. God doesn't want people to go to hell, but he wants everybody to come to the point of what? Repentance, He wants everybody to repent - turn from their sins and turn to Christ and be saved. We have a big task because Jesus said to go preach the gospel to everyone. That's a big task. That's our mission. And so we are going to talk about that here. We have some other tasks. One of them, Christian, is for you to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son, to be more like Jesus. To learn how to pray, witness, serve, to understand the Bible, to be led of the Holy Spirit of God. We have some work to do, not only in reaching the world, but in transforming us by God's power. There was a little piece of desert that suddenly became holy ground because there God showed up. God spoke his word there. God gave a project there, a task there.

IV. The Power of God

And number 4 today, God's power was demonstrated there. In verse 31, it says: *and when Moses saw it he wondered at the sight.* Acts chapter 7, verse 31. The verse before that mentions an angel in the flame of the fire. God's power was demonstrated on that holy ground. Before God gave Moses a task to do, God said who He was. *I am the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.* Before God did any of that, Moses began to sense something was different. Something is different here, I have to check this out and he draws a little closer. And as he draws closer he begins to hear God's voice. But because a bush was on fire it drew his attention, and because the bush didn't burn up it even got his attention more because he knew that something supernatural was happening. Now, God could have used any old bush. God could have used any bush that was out there in the desert, he just chose one. God could have used somebody besides Moses, but he just chose Moses to be his burning bush, to be that light to the world and to go burn for Him. God can use any old bush; He can even use you to display His power so others can hear His voice.

Before we ever started this building, before we ever tore down the old building, before we ever hammered one nail, we were as a church, you might remember, praying. Asking God for wisdom and guidance, and His strength, and His power. And now that we have this nice building, I find myself there again. God, I need your strength and your power, and your wisdom to do what you called us to do in this place.

Would you look with me in 1 Corinthians again, chapter 2. I love this chapter where Paul is describing what he was like when he went to the church at Corinth. And he writes here in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 1: *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. He said I didn't use big words and fancy speeches. I didn't do that when I came to you. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* What the message was to the lost people in Corinth, and how the church was built. He preached the cross, he preached Christ crucified. He preached the gospel. How Jesus died for us and was buried and rose again. Then verse 3, I love this verse: *And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.* I don't have a lot in common with Paul, but I like that verse because I've got all those in common. Weakness and fear and much trembling. Some years ago I was at a funeral which I

shared with another Pastor, and he said some things, then I'd say some things, kind of back and forth. I sat down, and I noticed when he stood up he had his notes and his hands were shaking, and I looked, and his knees were shaking. Praise God, I'm not alone in shaking. We're both nervous!

Verse 4: *And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.* "I don't just want to convince you by flowery speeches. I want His power to be upon me," said Paul, "so that when it is all over, your faith will be in God's power." It's all based on God. Moses had the burning bush experience; he knew that if anything was going to happen, God was going to have to do it. He turned to God, and God alone.

V. The Grace of God

We've got to hurry, time is almost gone. I've got one more. It's Acts chapter 7, verse 35. God's grace was remembered there. This is another reason it became holy ground -- because God showed His grace there. Verse 35: *This Moses whom they refused.* Whom they refused. Moses had a really bad day, forty years earlier. He got so mad, he got so upset, he killed an Egyptian. Remember that? And the very people in which he wanted to help, the Jewish people, said, "Well, are you going to kill us like that guy you killed yesterday?" I mean, that's a really bad day, don't you think? So, his own people turn against him, and Moses runs. He gets out of the country; he splits. He's not going back, not in his mind. He goes way out, miles and miles away to a desert land. He becomes a shepherd. And then one day at a place called holy ground, God says, "Moses, I want to use you. They rejected you. I haven't." And that's grace.

Now some of you in your past have really blown it. You blew it, right? We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. And you wonder how God could ever use you. But we come to this place set apart unto God -- to tell you about God's grace. That God can use you. But "by grace are you are saved through faith. It's not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. It's not of works, lest any man should boast." And salvation from our sin is by grace. God gives us kindness that we don't deserve all the time. So we are going to come to this place, and we are going to remember God is gracious.

I want to tell you about another place. Just outside of Jerusalem, Israel was an unholy place. It was a place where they crucified people who were thieves and murderers and criminals. It was called "the place of a skull." It was called Calvary. That is the name of our church! We named a church after that? Because that place is where the blessed Son of God died for us so that we could have eternal life. It's where that blood, that blood without blemish and without spot, fell to the ground and made it holy ground. Sometimes I, during this building project, have gone up here to the hardware store, and said this is to be charged to Calvary Baptist Church and they will type in the wrong letters because they don't know how to spell Calvary, and then they get to the word Baptist, and they say B,A....they don't know how to spell that, so ok, we finally get it typed into the computer. I have to spell it for them because

people today don't even know what Calvary is. The burdens were lifted at Calvary. And nearby that hill, He rose again from the grave.

There are some places that are holy in my mind. The house at 601 East Finley in Ottumwa, Iowa, the living room, where on March 28, 1975 I repented of my sin, and turned to Jesus Christ, and was saved. A church about a mile or two from there, where after I was converted to Christ, about a month later -- I was baptized. A few months later I surrendered to preach there. Four years later my bride walked the aisle and we were married there. A year later I was ordained to the Christian ministry there. And as a new Christian early on, it was there I began to grow and mature, hear God's Word. That's a holy place. Some of you may have such a place in your mind.

Let's make this place holy ground, by setting it apart unto Him, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Where God will always be honored and His Word always preached, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ always lifted up as the only way to have eternal life. Where we come together to love God and to love one another. Unsaved friend, today, person without Christ, this could be your holy ground -- where finally you stop running from God and put your faith in Jesus as your Savior, as your Lord.

Calvary Baptist Church

309 Water Street
Sauk City, WI 53583
saukprairiecalvary.com