

Date: June 14, 2020

Series: Heroes of Faith

Title: *Moses: The Perspective of Faith*

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Scripture: Exodus 3:1-15; 4:1-5, 10-17

Thank you, Whitney, David, and Wesley! You know, I think we have the only church in Maryland and maybe all surroundings states that can have a bassoon trio! Most church orchestras don't even HAVE a bassoon---we have three! God is good, we praise Him for that and as they lyrics to their song says, we praise Him for the beauty of our world, and for the beauty of this hour, and especially for His love that unites us!

You'll note that I'm preaching IN THE SANCTUARY this week. I'm doing that to give Matt Jenkins some practice in using the new equipment for when we do re-open our campus---hopefully in a few more weeks. Stay tuned!

I want to begin my comments today with an old story.

Nine GI's were on a weekend pass and they failed to show up at the Monday morning roll call. Their Colonel was furious. I mean, the first man didn't straggle in until 7:00PM. He explained, *"I'm sorry sir, but I had a date and lost track of the time and I missed the bus back. However, being determined to get in on time, I hired a cab. Halfway here, the cab broke down. So, I went to a farmhouse and persuaded the farmer to sell me a horse. I was riding to camp when the animal fell over dead. I walked the last ten miles, and just got here."*

The Colonel was skeptical, but he let the young man off with a reprimand.

However, after him, seven other stragglers in a row came in with the SAME EXACT STORY: had a date, missed the bus, hired a cab, bought a horse, it died, walked back, etc. By the time the ninth man reported in, the colonel had had it so with a lot of anger in his voice he asked, *"What happened to you?"* "Sir," the GI said, *"I had this date and missed the bus back, so I hired a cab."*

*"Wait!"* the colonel screeched at him, *"don't tell me the cab broke down."*

*"No sir,"* replied the soldier. *"The cab didn't break down. It was just that there were so many dead horses in the road, we had trouble getting through."*

I'll pause to allow you to laugh.

I'm still pausing.

Well, MY excuse for sharing this old joke is because the Hero of the Faith we are looking at today is known for his excuses---excuses as to why he couldn't do the task God asked him to do.

I'm referring to Moses, the "Prince of Egypt." Thanks to God's miraculous intervention, the pharaoh's daughter found and adopted baby Moses and then raised and educated him as part of the royal family.

The Bible tells us that when Moses grew up and saw the misery of his people who labored under the cruelty of the slave-masters, he took matters into his own hands and murdered an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew. When the Pharaoh found out about this, he tried to kill Moses---so Moses fled and went to live in Midian where he married a woman named Zipporah and started a family. He worked there as a shepherd, tending the

flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro, for 40 years; and then on an ordinary day—a day like so many others—God’s call came to him.

This brings us to our text for this morning. Take your Bibles and turn to the book of Exodus. Keep them open as we look at chapters 3 and 4.

Now, as I said, God’s call to Moses came on an ordinary day—a day that dawned just like every other day in the wilderness. I mean, no angel stopped by to tap Moses on the shoulder the night before and say, *“Hey, Mo, pay attention tomorrow, because God is going to be talking to you. By the way, take my advice, keep your eye out for unique bushes.”*

No, there were absolutely no hints, no premonitions, no special signs to alert him to the fact that God Himself was about to show up and change his life forever. It was just a common, ordinary, garden-variety dayshift on Mt. Horeb with his father-in-law’s sheep. I stress this because that’s how God often works. Without warning He speaks to ordinary people—people like you and me—on ordinary days. It could happen tomorrow.

- You could be wearing your facemask while you shop for groceries being sure to go the right way on the aisle at Giant---
- You could be at the sink washing your hands counting up to 20---

---when God speaks to you.

Let me put it this way. The ordinary routines of life are each potential Mt. Horebs for you and me. And, as I said, that’s how it happened for Moses. This 80-year-old shepherd was kicking his sandals in the sand as he had done on countless other days, watching the sheep eat and baa and bleat when he noticed a very EXTRA-ordinary thing; a common desert scrub brush on fire, and of course that in itself wasn’t all that odd, because like all shepherds, Moses had seen lightning strike scrub brush and ignite all the time. But this brushfire was unique because it didn’t burn out. The bush didn’t dissolve into smoke and ashes. No, it kept burning with a consistent blaze. This of course made Moses curious, so he went over to investigate.

Well, this is ALSO part of God’s method. Many times, on ORDINARY days He does something EXTRAORDINARY to get our attention—something to intrude into our routine and say, *“Wait a minute. Stop what you are doing and listen. I have something to say to you.”* In fact, take my advice here. Whenever you go through an unusual event it would be wise to ask, *“Is God trying to tell me something? What is God trying to teach me in all of this.”*

And I want you to be sure and note WHEN it was that God spoke to Moses. He spoke only AFTER Moses turned aside. Look at chapter 3, verse 4. ***“When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’”***

In fact, let’s TURN ASIDE and do a little self-evaluation right now. Ask yourself, *“How good am I at turning aside? How hard is it for my Heavenly Father to get my attention?”* In fact, let me strongly suggest that we all learn the discipline of REGULARLY, daily, turning aside; taking a moment to listen to God, because as I said a couple weeks back, He really does speak to us.

I confess, I have wondered if perhaps God allowed this COVID-19 pandemic to come because He had something to say to us and He knew that virus would get our attention. What do you think? Could God have allowed us to face this common enemy so we could hear Him saying things like:

*“You need to care more for your fellow man. You need to stop being so selfish and learn to help others.”*

I love the news story I heard about a Nursing Home in Newark, Ohio. Back in March, the staff saw what COVID was doing to the elderly in facilities like theirs, so they locked the doors. Every member of the staff stayed there 65 days to make sure their patients had no contact with the outside world. They slept on the floor in their offices. They were determined NOT to let their patients get this disease. And it worked, not a single resident got it. I know that pleased God; it always pleases Him when we love like Him, sacrificially putting others first.

Okay, back to Moses.

He saw this burning bush and turned aside and when he did he came face to face with his destiny. Look at verse 7 where God said, ***“I’ve been watching the situation. I’m aware of what’s happening. I’ve seen My people weeping in the night. I’ve heard the crack of the whip and the cries of the little ones. I’ve seen the bodies along the road or flung into the Nile like so many beasts of burden. None of this escapes My notice and I’m going to do something about it.”***

I’m sure Moses thought, *“Great! It’s about time!”* but he probably felt fairly neutral at this point because in his mind this great thing that God was going to do didn’t involve him. Remember, Moses had never read the book of Exodus, so he didn’t know what God was about to say. Well, as he was glowing in the joy that God was going to free His people, Moses heard the words that would change his life forever, as in verse 10 God said, ***“Therefore, come now, and I will send YOU to Pharaoh so that YOU may bring My people the sons of Israel out of Egypt.”***

In my mind Moses did sort of a double-take at this point and said, *“What did you say? Could you repeat that last part? ME?! You’re sending ME?!”*

It was as if, God were to come to you or me and say, *“I’ve heard the cries of people of color in America--- people who have suffered the pain of racism all their lives. And I’m going to do something about that.”* We would respond by thinking, *“Great! It’s about time!”* And then God would continue, *“The something I’m going to do is use YOU.”* Before you scoff and think, *“That’s not me---I’m not being called to be the next MLK, Jr.”*--- listen, I think God IS speaking to us; He’s telling us it’s time for each of us to do our part to ending racial injustice. God is talking to those of us who have said and done nothing, those who have not taken the time to try and understand how our friends of color have been and are hurting and why.

God is speaking to us all---are we listening?

If not, I would ask what ELSE does God have to do to get our attention so we will finally turn aside and listen.

Well, Moses’ realization that God set Him apart for this overwhelming task bowled him over, which led to his pile of EXCUSES, excuses that can be summarized in two QUESTIONS that he asked God and the first is in verse 11 where Moses asked:

### **(1) “WHO AM I that I should do this?”**

I think the thoughts that went through his mind at this point might have gone something like this, *“I can’t do this God! I’m a failure! Why, I still work for my father-in-law! I’m a loser! On top of that, I’m a convicted murderer. If I go down there, I’ll be arrested and executed. Plus, I can’t walk into Pharaoh’s royal court in this outfit smelling like sheep. I’m not so old that I’ve forgotten how those kind of people look at shepherds. Why, the Pharaoh will laugh so hard he’ll fall off his throne before I even get a chance to say anything. Sure, I used to be important but now I’m a nobody. And don’t forget—I tried this deliverance thing 40 years ago and I was neither believed nor listened to. Why should the people of Israel listen to me now? WHY ME LORD?”*

Basically, Moses' first pile of excuses added up to the fact that he felt INFERIOR, he felt like a FAILURE and the Bible also tells us that he felt INCAPABLE.

In chapter 4 verse 10 he added to his excuse pile by saying, ***“O Lord, I’m not one of those guys who can sell refrigerators at the North Pole. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since You have spoken to Your servant.”*** Now this was not entirely true. Acts 7:22 says that earlier in Moses' life, back during his days as a Prince of Egypt, he was, ***“...educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.”*** But that was half a life-time ago. At this point, Moses felt washed up. In his mind, he was a has-been, nothing more than an old shepherd. His current skills in public speaking were limited to the words and sounds that were used to motivate sheep, not people, not a nation, not a pharaoh! Moses summed it all up in verse 13 by saying, ***“I’m not as qualified as others. Send someone else.”*** And I love the way the Modern Language Bible translates it. Moses says, ***“O Lord, please send ANYONE else!”***

Basically Moses said, ***“Anyway you look at it God I’m not qualified. So why give me this task? It makes no sense. Surely You understand that I should be EXCUSED.”***

We need to pay close attention to this because so many times we excuse ourselves from answering God's call with the same basic rationale, ***“Why me? I’m not talented enough. I’m just not able to do this God.”*** Listen, our TALENTS or LACK OF THEM are not an issue when it comes to accomplishing God's will, whether that involves sharing our faith with a perfect stranger or standing up for justice and fairness in this fallen world. The fact is Moses' sin and guilt and limitations and shortcomings were no longer the ultimate truth because like Gideon, GOD would be WITH HIM. Listen, when it comes to doing His will in this world, God is not looking for extraordinary people. He's looking for ORDINARY people who will trust an EXTRAORDINARY God. It is as Paul puts it in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:7: ***“We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God...and not from us.”***

I like how Swindoll puts it. He says, ***“Any old bush will do as long as God is in the bush.”*** All you have to be is available. To keep with the bush metaphor, all you have to be is “flammable.” God is saying, ***“Moses, I want you to burn for me like no man has burned before. I want you to be My burning bush! You’ve been dried out and well-seasoned in this howling wasteland for the past 40 years. But that’s how I wanted you—dried out, because now you can burn with My presence and power.”***

Well, God is still looking for people like Moses; available, “dried out” people who will say, ***“I’m here Lord. I’m yours...thorns and all. Just set me afire. This little light of mine. I’m going to let it shine!”***

I love this lyric I came across written by Amy Carmichael:

***“Give me the Love that leads the way, The faith that nothing can dismay, The hope no disappointments tire, The passion that will burn like fire, Let me not sink to be a clod; Make me Thy fuel, flame of God.”***

## **(2) Well, God's response prompted Moses' second set of excuses to begin to pile up as he asked, Okay—well, “Who are You?”**

Look at Exodus 3:13. Moses says, ***“Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ They will ask, ‘Which God are you talking about?’ Well, Who are You? What shall I tell them?”***

In other words, Moses REVERSED his first question. First, he asked, ***“Who am I that You would send me?”*** Now Moses asks, ***“Who are You that You would send I?”***

Well, God's answer to this question was almost as dramatic as the burning bush. Look at verse 14. God says, ***"I am Who I am' This is what you are to say to the Israelites: Tell them, 'I Am' has sent me to you."*** In these two words, God was telling Moses that He is the eternally existing One, always present to help His people. Then with the miracle of changing Moses' rod into a snake and back, and giving Moses' leprosy and then healing him, not to mention the burning bush that was not consumed; God showed Moses that He had the power to do what needed doing. So, Moses had no excuse to say "no." All Moses had to do was to yield his life to God's direction and the unlimited, all-sufficient power of God would flow through him, meeting his every need as he led the people of Israel out of bondage. The same is true for you and me. Our sufficiency for any task we are given by God is found not within ourselves but in God. This is why Oswald Chambers once said, *"Beware of any work for God which enables you to avoid concentration on Him. There is only one way to develop spiritually and that is by concentration on God."*

Samaritan's Purse, the Christian medical/relief organization was founded by a man named Bob Pierce. As Bob went all over the world serving our God by delivering people from hunger and disease, he learned to practice a philosophy that he called, "GOD ROOM." This is when you commit yourself to bigger things than you can humanly do. You give God room to work. I love that. Remember. Doing God's will is not based on our resources. Doing God's will simply means we rely on the nature of I AM. The sufficiency for the tasks He gives comes from His power and not our own.

You know, the interesting thing about this passage is that it doesn't tell us what happened to the burning bush. We find out what happened to Moses and the children of Israel. We find out what happened to Pharaoh and the soldiers. But we never find out what happened to the bush.

And we don't because I think there is a sense in which it's still burning. God is still waiting for people to turn aside. I think God's waiting for that right now. Would you turn aside now and pray with me?