

“Who Am I To Go?”
Exodus 3:1-15
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“But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” (Exodus 3:11 NRSV).

We all know those people who we see at work or in the church. We see what they can do or see their potential, but when asked to take something on or simply show up to something, they have every excuse in the book. They are always on time, do good work, but never extend themselves or take a little bit of a risk to make things better. We scratch our heads and wonder why, eventually stop asking and usually move on to someone else. Then we grow frustrated and throw up our hands because we get burned out from doing everything ourselves.

In the call of Moses to lead the people out of Egypt we see that a little persistence from God, actually a lot of persistence from God goes a long way. In a way Moses is a very model of Gods church today. We want to serve, we want to do Gods will, but when it comes down to it, are we ready to lead? Often we ask the same rhetorical question of Moses, Who am I to go?

Whether we believe that we are not good enough, or afraid, or simply don't want to be inconvenienced, we can think of several reasons for not following Gods lead. We can even go through the motions, but if we don't make the connection then we are just running in place. Here is a man who sees a burning bush that is not consumed, encounters the Holy presence of God, and then when God gives him the task, Moses response is, you've got the wrong guy. Even when God says no I don't because I will be with you, Moses has another one, well if they question me about your name what should I say?

So God says tell them that IAM has sent you and it will all be good. One would think that would be enough, and the passage ends here but we don't do the story justice. In chapter 4 Moses is full of more excuses, “but what if they don't believe me?” The frustration is mounting for God so he says drop your staff, and it's a snake, pick it up it's a staff again. Put your hand in your cloak, and pull it out, doesn't look so good. Now do it again, hands back to normal. And if that doesn't work touch your staff to the water and it will turn to blood. Okay?

But then Moses in verse chapter 4 still says “I have never been an eloquent speaker, I am slow of speech and of tongue. God says I will be with your mouth, and then Moses in desperation says please send someone else! God again is really angry and says your brother Aaron is a good speaker, he will be your mouth. No more excuses I'm tired of them, you and your brother go!

It's exhausting isn't it? So much so that Old Testament professor of Candler School of Theology asked his class what Moses was doing here. The answers spewed out of the class from testing to see if it was really God. He said, No Moses knew it was really God, it says so from the beginning in chapter 3. He hid his face from the Lord." Other answers ranged from rejecting his past and upbringing, to putting limits on Gods power, to being humble in the sight of the Lord. Finally he said no Moses was lying, because he didn't want to do it. Dress it up any way you want Moses was trying to get out of it, God knew it and wasn't going to take no for an answer.

Moses of course was not the last to do this. Even when Jesus performed his signs in wonders, when Jesus told the Parables, the Disciples didn't get it. The people didn't get it until much later. Do we get it? There is great need in this world, there is great need in our community, and whether we know it or not, there is great need in our church family. If you are one of those we can rest assured that God has heard our cry, has seen the suffering of Gods people and is going to respond. But do we as the church want the next sentence to be: "we are still bogged down in negotiations around the terms of who can go, and if you would like to apply we have several openings?"

Of course we don't! Unfortunately the mainline church has been perceived as doing just that. Many talkers and not many doers! Donald Strobe made this comparison of today's Christians: It doesn't seem to me that many of us are risking very much for our faith. I once heard someone describe the average Christian today in terms of a person dressed in a deep-sea diving suit, oxygen mask firmly in place, marching resolutely into the bathroom to pull the plug out of the bathtub. An old slogan says: "Expect great things from God; Attempt great things for God." We're pretty good at the first; not so hot with the second.

Remember the words of Shakespeare: "Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, By fearing to attempt." (Measure for Measure, I, iv.)¹

If we looked at ourselves a little more closely we might find what it is that gives us the ability to try. About six years ago, Eddie Stankey died at the age of 83. Time magazine carried his obituary.

Older baseball fans will remember him as a spitfire second baseman, helping the Brooklyn Dodgers, the Boston Braves and the New York Giants win pennants and championships.

Branch Rickey, the general manager of the Dodgers (who will be played by Robert Redford in an upcoming movie biopic about Jackie Robinson), once said

¹ Donald B. Strobe, Collected Words, www.Sermons.com

about Stankey: "He can't run, he can't hit and he can't throw, but if there's a way to beat the other team, he'll find it."

Moses is the Stankey of the Old Testament. Not so much because he "beat" anyone. That wasn't what he was about, at least not in his second and third stages of life. The point is, that he doesn't come off as someone who had much talent, but somehow he always got the job done.

Who are we to go? We are children of the God of Abraham and Isaac, the God of Jacob and Moses made so by the grace of God through Christ who has made all things new.