

"TRIUMPH OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT: FINDING YOUR VOICE"

Exodus 4:10-12

July 2, 2017

¹⁰ Moses raised another objection to GOD: "Master, please, I don't talk well. I've never been good with words, neither before nor after you spoke to me. I stutter and stammer."

¹¹⁻¹² GOD said, "And who do you think made the human mouth? And who makes some mute, some deaf, some sighted, some blind? Isn't it I, GOD? So, get going. I'll be right there with you—with your mouth! I'll be right there to teach you what to say."

A couple of weeks ago, we looked at the Moses story. We heard how God partnered with Moses to part the Red Sea, thereby saving the Israelites and crushing Pharaoh's armies. Moses presented as a powerful figure in that narrative, a great hero to his people. Moses spoke and the seas parted. Moses spoke and the people followed him. Moses spoke, warning Pharaoh time and again of the harm that would befall his empire if he failed to heed God's words.

Pharaoh did not heed the warnings, and he paid the ultimate price, losing his men, much of his wealth, and ultimately, even his first-born son. God wasn't kidding around and Moses was the messenger, the

voice who was God's instrument in the greatest narrative of the Israelite people.

But before Moses could be the people's great hero, before he could be God's mouthpiece in the face of extreme and powerful evil, he had to be called to service by his Lord. And that's where his troubles started—with the call.

Do you ever wonder why God calls you to do certain things? Do you ever doubt your abilities to be the person that you intrinsically know God wants you to be? You know, it's funny, but God never calls us to stay right where we are; I don't recall a single incidence where God's Spirit visited someone and said, "Atta boy, Atta girl, just stay right there on that couch doing nothing. I want you to be afraid to move. I want you to resist change. Yeah, just thought I'd check in with you and tell you what a great job you are doing, doing just what you have been doing....." Somehow, I don't think this is how God works in our lives.

On this July 4th weekend, I think of you who were called upon to defend our country and world peace in the various wars and conflicts of

our time. I think of all those who fought with their voices and fought with their guns to secure independence for this country. I think of all those who fought for racial justice with their voices and with their guns in our Civil War, brother against brother, American against American.

In parades and ceremonies across the country this July 4th we honor those of you who served in the military. Many of you served in wartime. How did you do it? How did you muster up the courage to report for your training? How did you make it through your service?

I imagine that most of you felt very unprepared for active service that first day in boot camp. Why me? How am I at all cut out for this? You must have asked yourself these questions, which, if you think about it, is the same as asking God. How will I hold up out there? You must have wondered how you would do it.

You were trained. You were indoctrinated. You became skilled. You were given weapons and tools and strategies and commands. And then you marched, or you sailed, or you parachuted into harm's way.

And we are free today because you answered that call and found your voice out there. I thank you. We all thank you.

Moses questioned his calling, too. He questioned why God would set him up for failure. Why would God would send him to Pharaoh's palace to be the spokesperson for the Israelite people, God's own messenger? It didn't make sense. Moses shouldn't be anyone's spokesperson. He had no training; he had no power. And worse yet, he stuttered.

How could he express himself with authority when he couldn't get the words out? Why would God pick him, and not his brother Aaron, or some other person who was more articulate? What did it say about God that his messenger was a man with a speech disability? It doesn't sound very self-assured to me. It doesn't seem very well thought out to send this guy into that situation without the ability to express himself with confidence!

That's what Moses was saying to God, too. Why me? I had Don read you the passage where Moses questions God's judgment in making him God's spokesperson. If you back up several verses though, you see that Moses is dragged into his hero's role kicking and screaming the whole way!

God tells Moses that he will be God's agent in bringing Pharaoh to his knees, but Moses objects, protesting that the Israelites are never going to follow him. "They won't trust me!" he cries. "They won't listen to a word I say. They're going to say, 'God? Appear to him? Hardly!'" So, God turns the staff Moses is carrying into a snake, and back into a stick in a showing of how the people will believe him.

Moses is not convinced. So, God next turns Moses' hand leprous, and then just as quickly, cures him. This will surely show the people and they will believe Moses is God-inspired. Moses is not buying a word of what God is selling.

So then, God shows him how to turn the water of the Nile into blood. Now, that's impressive, you must admit. But Moses is not

wanting to be impressed; he doesn't want to be called to this task. That's the bottom line. He doesn't want to be God's agent against Pharaoh. He doesn't want to be God's magician. He doesn't want the power God is offering to give him.

It's only in the next passage, the one Don read you today, that we get our clue as to why Moses is balking. It's not that he distrusts God or God's power. It's not that he doesn't want his people freed from their slavery. It's not that he doesn't think the signs are dramatic enough to get Pharaoh's attention.

No! Moses doesn't want to accept the task to which God is calling him, because he doesn't trust *himself*. After telling God about his stuttering disability (like God doesn't already know), he wails, "Oh, Master, please! Send somebody else!" he doesn't trust himself, even with The Almighty's assurance that he will not face Pharaoh alone.

King George the VI of his United Kingdom was pressed into service in his own time, too, ascending the British throne just a short

time before Hitler unleashed his evil campaign across Europe. Prince Albert never intended to become King; his brother, Edward VIII was the first born and he should have been the king following the death of their father, George V. However, his illicit sexual relationship with a divorced American, Wallis Simpson, left him forced to choose between the throne and the woman he loved. He chose the woman.

Prince Albert, known as "Bertie" to his family, was terrified. He was unprepared to lead his subjects, especially into wartime. He had no preparation. He had no training. He did not have the support of his father. And he had a stuttering disability. How would he ever be able to deliver inspiring speeches to his people and to his troops on the newly invented radio?

Tonight's film is a snapshot in history, a lesser-known story of the triumph of the human spirit. Colin Firth, Geoffrey Rush, and Helena Bonham Carter deliver powerhouse performances about a modern-day Moses called by God into a most unlikely service. Bertie is

thrown into the mire to face his own Pharaoh-- Adolph Hitler-- and he seemingly has none of the tools needed to make it even a contest.

I believe that God calls us to the impossible, using our own weaknesses and infirmities to achieve seemingly-unwinnable victories. Some of them affect the entire world, and some of them only affect our own inconsequential little ones. Nevertheless, God's Spirit is always meddling in our safe, unremarkable lives to further God's plans, plans that we cannot always comprehend or appreciate. Sometimes we are left scratching our heads, but sometimes, just sometimes, we can peek into the bigger picture for just a minute, and we get it.

What is God calling you to do? C'mon, we all feel some stirrings now and again. Maybe you chalk them up to hunches, or they seem like silly ideas, impossibilities, outrageous impulses that are just that, impulses to be ignored. I know I sure felt that way when God planted in my brain that I should leave law practice for a life in ministry. "Are you kidding me, God? Oh, please Master! Send somebody else!"

Yeah...no. This is not a wrong number. I am choosing you.

What changes in your life is God calling you to make? What are your excuses against making them and how are your excuses working out for you? I thought so. You don't have to be Moses. You don't have to be Prince Albert, Duke of York. You don't have to be going off to war, or off to a major life adventure either. You are you and your relationship with God is your own. So is God's call on your life. It is your own. It does not have to be public or world-shaking. But it is there, so let's set aside the pretense that God is not speaking to you.

Your mind may be stuttering. Your heart may be stuttering. Your mouth may be unable to form the words, "Here I am! Send me," but finding your voice means finding your way, means finding your relationship with God, means finding a way to make your life mean something. Something extraordinary. The world needs your voice. The church needs your voice. God needs your voice. How will you respond?

"Here I am, Lord, send me."

May It Be So.