

Keynotes from Sam Gordon's am Sermon on 13/06/2021

“Excuses excuses!

Text: Exodus 3 v 1-15 & 4 v 1-13

Scripture references from the ESV

Exodus 3:1-15 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³ And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” ⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” ⁵ Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶ And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. ⁷ Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” ¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” ¹² He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.” ¹³ Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

Ch 4: 1-13 Then Moses answered, “But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you.’” ² The LORD said to him,

“What is that in your hand?” He said, “A staff.” ³ And he said, “Throw it on the ground.” So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. ⁴ But the LORD said to Moses, “Put out your hand and catch it by the tail”—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— ⁵ “that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.” ⁶ Again, the LORD said to him, “Put your hand inside your cloak.” And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. ⁷ Then God said, “Put your hand back inside your cloak.” So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. ⁸ “If they will not believe you,” God said, “or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. ⁹ If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.” But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” ¹¹ Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? ¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” ¹³ But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.

Moses' life can be split into three forty year time slots. He spent 40 years in a palace in Egypt as a scholar, 40 years in the desert as a shepherd, and then, at the age of 80 when most people are wanting to slow down and take it easy, God called him to spend 40 years as a saviour to the nation. He spent his last 40 years as a prophet, a man under God's anointing. Despite his foibles and weaknesses, Moses was a man who walked closely with his God, and who is spoken of in scripture as the meekest man on earth.

Moses is set before us as a man of faith (**Hebrews 11:23-27** see p4) and as one who saw the invisible, chose the imperishable and did the impossible, showing what a little faith in a big God can do. What can we learn from this?

- God called Moses when he was 80, and Moses went out on the trail to do business for God. At this age, most people are looking to put their feet up and live a life of leisure but serving Jesus Christ is what counts for eternity. World mission, or service in the local church, isn't just for the young.

We all have a role to play, no

matter what our age.

How did God's call work out in the life of Moses?

We are introduced to the God of Moses as the present tense God (v14). He is God of the here and now, not just of yesterday or tomorrow, a God of extravagant grace who:

- meets us where we are but takes us where he wants us to be
- takes us the way that we are but shapes us into the people he wants us to be
- specialises in restoring failures (**Exodus 2: 11-15** see p4)

As far as God is concerned, failure is never final - he is the God of the second chance.

Moses was just having an ordinary shepherding day when he saw a bush on fire. (**Ex 3:1-3**). His attention was captured and then God called to him out of the bush (**3:4**). In all our work for God, what matters is what we are, rather than what we do. God is not so much interested in our ability as in our availability. The God who spoke to Moses is also speaking to us now.

The message from the bush is a call to:

- **holiness (3:2)** – fire is always a symbol of the holiness of God. **Hebrews 12:29** tells us that **our God is a consuming fire**. If we want to serve the Lord, then all that is worthless and unholy must be consumed in the divine flame. We are commanded to be holy (**1Peter 1:16** it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy.").
- **graciousness (3:2)** – the bush referred to was the despised thorn bush of the desert, yet God was prepared to reveal himself through it. It was a picture of how God purposed in grace to work in and through his servant. It was out of the bush that God revealed his heart for his people, seeing their affliction and hearing their cries. He identified with their sorrows as Moses needed to. Such ministry takes grace.

- **faithfulness (3:2)** – the bush was not consumed. God revealed himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (**3:6**). The God of Moses' fathers would be his God, and our God too.

This was a summons from heaven for Moses. He was confronted with the awesome majesty of God, and was understandably afraid, hiding his face (**3:6**). The Lord told him exactly what he wanted him to do. Moses was to bring his people out of their bondage in the land of Egypt. Moses did not respond well to what God is asking of him. He gave one excuse after another, but they are excuses we all too often use ourselves.

- a) He felt inferior (v11).** He saw himself as an insignificant shepherd, but God gave him the assurance of his presence (**v12**). In the Great Commission, we have this assurance too. We need not worry because the Lord is on our side.
- b) He thought he wouldn't have all the answers (v13).** He felt out of his depth. God told him that he would have God as his portion – all that God is would be his (**vv14-15**). The God who brought something out of nothing is able to equip him and enable him for the task. Jehovah Jireh, the God who is enough, would be more than a match for all his fears.
- c) He is afraid of rejection (4:1).** He has a fear of being ridiculed. God reminds him of his amazing power (**4:2-7**). Our God is able to do anything, in fact immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine (**Eph 3: 20** see p4)
- d) He felt inadequate (4:10)** He reckoned he had no natural talent in public speaking. God told him he would meet his deepest needs (**4:11-12**). Moses did not need a course in oratory skill – he just needed to trust in the Lord's ability. God would do what was needed to make Moses an effective servant.
- e) He thought he was the wrong person (4:13)** He really didn't want to go back to Egypt. Effectively, he was saying (like Jonah) I won't go. God doesn't take no for an answer – Moses is his choice for this task, but he sent Aaron with him, something Moses came to regret further down the line.

God's way may not be the easy way but it is always the best way. Moses tried to get out of what God called him to do. His initial response was much like ours often is. We say 'Lord, here I am – send someone else!'

Has God been speaking to you about doing something more for him? Has your response been excuses, excuses?

When we say yes to the call of God in our life, there are three characteristics that should mark our decision.

1. We will be absolutely certain that it is God's voice we have heard, not just something we want to do.
2. We will have a daring confidence in God's power, because we step out in faith, depending entirely upon him
3. We will find immense comfort in his plan. There is no point in us resisting or even trying to alter God's plan for our lives as Moses and Jonah showed – his way not the easy way but it is the best way because the Lord is good.

The great I Am is still with us and calling all of us to follow him, to serve him, to prove him, to walk with him and to impact our world for him.

God is calling us out of our comfort zone, asking us to leave the familiar behind us and move out and onwards. He wants us to trust him and launch out, taking a risk. The Lord loves to lead his people into places where they have never been before. In the words of a hymn by Noel Grant:

Above thine own ambitions here another voice is sounding clear;

It is the call of God to thee: O leave thy all, and follow Me!

The price is high, severe the test for those who would enjoy God's best;

Surrender all, then take the road with those who will go through with God.

God uses people just like Moses, in one sense a misfit, but representative of the kind of people God calls to serve in the local church and the local community. God picks us up and dusts us down, sending us out to serve his people.

He calls us to go beyond the boundaries of our safety net – no more excuses. They have all been used already!

Abraham was old unattractive	Jacob was insecure	Leah was
Joseph was abused poor	Moses stuttered	Gideon was
Samson was co-dependent affair and family problems	Rahab was immoral	David had an
Elijah was suicidal reluctant	Jeremiah was depressed	Jonah was
Naomi was a widow impulsive and hot-tempered	John the Baptist was eccentric	Peter was
Martha worried a lot Samaritan woman had several failed marriages	Zacchaeus was unpopular	The
Thomas had doubts hyper- sensitive	Paul had poor health	Timothy was

They were a bunch of misfits but God used them all. It doesn't matter what is in our CV, or what baggage we carry.

That is why we have this treasure in jars of clay. That is where God excels. Once he has cleaned us up, he makes each one of us a channel of blessing.

So when God calls you today, the best thing you can do is to follow – no excuses!

Hebrews 11:23-28 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he

endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

Exodus 2:11-15 One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. ¹² He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³ When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?" ¹⁴ He answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known." ¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

Ephesians 3:20 -21 ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.