

Called, But!

Scripture Mark 1:14-20

Exodus 4:10-17

Today's two scripture passages are about two calling stories. The first reading, the passage from the Gospel of Mark shows Jesus calling his disciples, Simon and his brother Andrew, and also James and his brother John while they were fishing. Our second reading in Exodus details God's calling of Moses to lead God's people out of Egypt. While both stories are about calling, there is one big difference in these two stories. As I read these text, please try to see what that difference might be. Gospel of Mark ch.1:v.14-20 found in New Testament page number 35.

Now, listen to the word.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." ¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Yes, Jesus called the fishermen to be his disciples, and they immediately followed him, leaving everything behind.

Our next scripture reading is in Exodus when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. Moses, born a Hebrew, grew up in the Egyptian court as the son of the Egyptian princess, but now he is exiled in the wilderness for forty years.

God finally decided the time had come. God will send Moses to save the Israelites from slavery. So God appeared to Moses in the Burning Bush and revealed who God is and what he planned to do with God's people. And God told Moses, "Come, I will send YOU to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt. And I will be with you."

And here comes Moses response.

Exodus 4:10-17 found in Old Testament page number 51.

¹⁰ But Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." ¹¹ Then the LORD said to him, "Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" ¹² Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak." ¹³ But he said, "O my Lord, please send someone else." ¹⁴ Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, "What of your brother Aaron, the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. ¹⁶ He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him. ¹⁷ Take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs."

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The calling of Jesus' disciples and the calling of Moses. What was the biggest difference you heard in these two stories? Yes!

When Jesus called to his disciples, "I will make you fish for people" they just got up and followed Jesus, immediately leaving everything behind, their boats, their nets, and their family. Every time I read this passage, I am like, "wow, how could they do that?"

But what about Moses? Did he take the calling right away and left? No. He didn't even look that excited about the fact that God had chosen him to lead God's people to the salvation.

Considering that Moses was arguably the greatest servant of God in the Old Testament whom God spoke face to face, a great man that God entrusted with the whole exodus event, his reaction was rather discouraging.

Somewhat disappointing, in fact.

Let's look at the story in more detail.

God's appearance to Moses was rather impressive from the beginning. When Moses saw a burning but not consumed bush, he knew something extra ordinary was going on there. God called, "Moses, Moses, I am the God of your ancestors." Then God said, "I heard the cry of the Israelites, and I will send **you** to Pharaoh to bring my people out." God knew all the hardships of God's covenant people in Egypt and finally God is going to do something about it. (pause) Despite this grand introduction, however, Moses' response was rather timid. Not that Moses didn't have a heart for the Hebrew people. He knew their hardships and he considered the Hebrews as his own. Isn't that why he killed the soldiers who were beating the Hebrew people and ran away to the wilderness? Although he had heart for his people, when God asked Moses to lead out of the slavery, there was something holding him back. Moses said to God.

"What if the people don't believe me that you sent me. I don't even know your name."

I mean if you are going to go up against the greatest empire of the day, you ought to at least know the name of the one sending you. So, God revealed God's own name for the first time in the bible to Moses.

"Now, can you go?"

Moses came up with another excuse.

"What if the people don't trust me. I am just an ordinary person without any power." So God showed what Moses was able to do on this mission. In front of him his staff became a snake and back to a staff. His hand turned leprous and then was restored. God said if Moses would take some water from The Nile and pour it on land, it would turn into blood.

"Now, can you go?"

Then Moses finally admitted the real reason he was afraid to be a leader.

"But, but...I am not **good at speech**, you know?"

"Who gives speech to all people? Isn't it I? I will tell you exactly what you are to speak. Now, CAN YOU JUST GO?"

"Oh God, please send someone else."

Now God is very angry.

"URRRRRRG...Don't you have your brother Aaron? He is a very good speaker. Take him with you and let him speak for you, but YOU must go."

Even after God revealed God's sacred name to him for the first time, even after he gained the power to perform awesome miracles, he still hesitated to go, because of his slow speech? Come on! Don't you find this little strange?

When I read this passage, however, I understand exactly how Moses felt. Although he was a Hebrew, Moses grew up in the Egyptian court. Therefore, Hebrew probably was not his first language and he would have gotten his education in Egyptian, not in Hebrew. And God asked him to lead Hebrew people.

Those of us who speak English as a second language we know how we feel about public speech.

Ever since I felt God is pushing me into the ministry, I brought the same questions and excuses as Moses did so many times, "Are you sure, God? Do you really want me to do this? Don't you know how long it takes **for me** to write a sermon? Even when I preach, will people understand me?"

Whenever I tried to turn away with my excuses, however, God kept calling me back to church.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

Each one of us hear a calling from God in some way or another. God calls us to be Christians, followers of Christ, continuing his ministry. Jesus' ministry can take various forms, from kind acts to your neighbors to the faithful decision you make in your job **as well as** being a leader in your church community. I see that this church, the Presbyterian Church in Leonia is blessed by many leaders who bring their own unique cultural

background. Some of you may be called to serve people in the culture which is not your own. Some of you may be terrified with idea that you have to communicate with a language not your own just like Moses was.

But do you know what brought Moses out of his hiding place? Let's look at Exodus 4:14. (give some time to find the passage)

v.14 Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, "What of your brother Aaron, the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad."

It was his brother Aaron, the presence of someone who stood by him, someone who was coming out and welcomed him with glad heart. That was what moved Moses to go forth.

Do you see your Aaron? Look around you. Your church family in front of your pew and behind and the people who sit next you. Do you see you have many Aarons surrounding you?

I understand you are going through some difficult time. Saying good bye to Rev. Given must be very hard let alone thinking of the uncertainty the future ahead of you. You might not help but think

'It was just going so well. But now what?'

But God has a plan for you, a wonderful and beautiful plan. This is the time that you take courage, trusting your Aarons around you, and also being Aarons for each other. Without Aaron, Moses wouldn't be able to see himself doing all the things he had done.

In fact, none of God's servants in the Bible were completely ready when they were called. Even Jesus' disciples who followed Jesus immediately, they didn't leave alone. Jesus called them together with their brothers, their Aaron. Although they had no idea what they were signing up for they could leave because they had their brothers with them. And God literary had to drag Moses out from the wilderness. But they accepted the call. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and established a covenant people. The disciples, after Jesus' death and resurrection, proclaimed the gospel and built the foundation of the church.

Neither Moses nor the disciples were perfectly ready, but they were equipped by God while they did the task. Many times they made mistakes, but they trusted in God's judgment in calling, not their own judgment whether they can do it or not.

Brothers and sisters in Leonia,

We are chosen people, chosen to follow, chosen to serve. The blessing is that we are not alone. God has given us many Aarons that we could serve together. God is calling you. What is your response?

To the God of all grace,

Who calls you to share God's eternal glory in union with Christ,

Be the power forever. Amen.