**GOD CALLED MOSES**

 April 18, 2021

Exodus 3:1-4:17 Key Verse 3:10-12a, “‘So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.’ But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ And God said, ‘I will be with you.’”

Last week, in Exodus 1 and 2, we learned how God miraculously saved Moses and prepared him for God’s great purpose; the Exodus of his own people. Moses was born in the most sorrowful and heart-broken situation in which every Hebrew baby boy should have been thrown into the Nile river. But in God’s divine intervention, he was adopted to Pharaoh’s daughter and was raised as a prince in Egypt receiving all princely educations. However, even though he was raised as an Egyptian prince, when he grew up, he made a most significant irreversible decision of faith in his life. It was that he refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter and chose to be mistreated along with the suffering people of God. It was a painful and costly decision but definitely pleased God. However, unlike his expectation, he was rejected by his own people when he tried to be their savior using his own power and position he had. Moreover, he had to flee from Pharaoh as a political refugee. He settled down in a Midian desert establishing a family and he became a shepherd. His life once again dramatically changed from a prince in Egypt to a nameless shepherd in a remote desert. His decision of faith seemed to be in vain. His dream of saving his own people also seemed to be totally crushed. But it was not so. He just needed to be trained more to be fully prepared as a servant of God. God’s time was different from his own time. When he was young, his own passion and zeal outran God’s plan and God’s way. When he was young, even though he had a good intension to serve God, he had strong pride and self-confidence full of his own passion and ideas. But after 40 years of a humble shepherd life in a desert, his self-confidence and pride were totally broken. He became a man of humility and patience. In short, from God’s point of view, he was ready as a servant of God who can depend on God alone absolutely by faith.

In today’s passage we are going to learn how God calls Moses and commissions him as a shepherd for God’s people precisely when he thought he was really unqualified and inadequate due to his reluctance and shortcomings. This principle applies to us as well. So, let’s learn how we can be used by God for his life-saving work.

**I. God’s calling of Moses (3:1-22)**

Look at verse 1. Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. According to the map of bible archeology, there was an 18 km desert between Jethro’s town and Mt. Horeb and the burning bush was 44 km from Jethro’s town. This means that Moses led his father-in-law’s flock quite far from his town. Probably at that time after 40 years of a long shepherd life, he was restless and was searching for something. In God there is no coincidence. It was the very special journey for him even though Moses was not aware of it.

In verses 2-3, there the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.” As we know, everything in this world that burns is consumed. Ultimately it burns out and becomes ashes. But what a strange sight it was! Moses saw the burning bush. But the burning bush didn’t burn up at all. It remained same. The flame of fire within the bush also remained same. This strange sight drew Moses closer and closer to the burning bush. Then why did God appear to Moses in this way? This unextinguished flame of fire was the sign and vision of presence and character of the eternal God. To me, I think God purposely did so to re-ignite Moses’ burn-out heart after his 40 years of wilderness life; to help him to envision God’s eternally unextinguished burning passion, zeal, and power.

When the LORD saw him come closer, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” Moses answered simply, “Here I am.” (4) Then the LORD began to speak to Moses. Look at verse 5. “‘Do not come any closer.’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.’” Here, “Take off your sandals.” means “showing high respect and reverence.” “Holy ground” represents “God’s holy presence.” Here, the meaning of “holy” is “set apart.” As you know, holy God doesn’t belong to this corrupt world. He is a set-apart being from the world which is corrupt due to men’s sin. So, any corrupt man cannot come near to holy God. So God stopped Moses and told him, “Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Moses took off his sandals. Then the Lord said to him, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” (6a) Finally, Moses understood what was happening to him. Moses was standing in the awesome presence of the Holy God. He hid his face, because he was afraid to look at the Holy God.

Like Moses, we who are sinful in nature cannot come close to the Holy God except through our Lord Jesus Christ who became our perfect and eternal mediator between holy God and us. Like Moses, when we who are sinful in nature step into the holiness of God, we cannot but be afraid to look at holy God because God’s holy presence exposes all our sinfulness. But thank God who allows us to come to him through Jesus Christ. After drawing Moses into his holy presence, now God begins to share with Moses his heart for the people of Israel. Look at verses 7-9. “The LORD said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.” The LORD had revealed to Abraham that his descendants would suffer at the hands of the Egyptians for 400 years. The LORD himself led Israel and his sons down into Egypt through Joseph. This was the trial that was ordained by God for the Israelites. God had a great purpose even through their suffering in Egypt to raise up the Israelites as his treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But God was not indifferent to the suffering of his people as they were being prepared for their mission. God saw their misery. He heard their groaning as slaves. He was concerned about them. Finally, when the time was ready, before their trial became too great, God had come down to rescue his people from their misery in Egypt. He would bring them up out of the land of Egypt and give them a land flowing with milk and honey, a land that would be all their own. Our God is a God of history. At the same time, he is the God of each moment, for he sees his people in their need and is ready to answer their need according to his great purpose for them. Surely God sees each person; now each of you. He hears your cry. He knows what you need most. God knows what you need most is to know him; to know his great love for you; and to know his awesome salvation plan for you in Jesus Christ.

After sharing with Moses his heart toward his people, now God addressed Moses directly. Let’s look at verse 10. “*So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.*” God was commissioning Moses to go as his representative before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to demand freedom for the Israelites. But how was Moses’ response? Look at verse 11. “*But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt*?’” When Moses heard God’s heart and plan, he must have been glad because for sure he had loved his own people and had compassion toward their suffering. However, as for sending him as God’s representative to Pharaoh and his own people, he was very reluctant. He had strong conviction that he was not a right person for the mission. To this Moses, the LORD was not swayed from his choice. Instead, God gave him a promise. Let’s look at verse 12. “*And God said, ‘I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain*.’” God had not made a mistake in choosing Moses. God’s one word of promise, “I will be with you.” would be enough for Moses to bring his people out of Egypt despite all his past failure experience. We believe that this one word of promise from God is also enough for us as well to carry out God’s world campus mission in any circumstance since Jesus clearly said to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20, “…All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me…surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

When God promised that he would be with him, Moses wanted to know the answer to his own people’s possible question, “What is his name?” God told Moses, “My name is ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (14) “I AM WHO I AM” means “the One who exists by himself.” Who can say to himself, “I exist by myself?” No one except Creator God (the First Cause of all creation) who is eternal. Historically this eternal Creator God had revealed himself to the Israelites’ ancestors; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and he revealed his world redemption plan and made a covenant relationship with them. This “I AM WHO I AM” Creator God is his everlasting name and it means his love toward his covenant people will be everlasting. What a wonderful awesome grace we have in such wonderful loving God! Moses has to tell the name of this awesome and historical God to all the Israelites. All the power for Moses and his people in whatever situations and circumstances would come from the authority of this awesome name of God when they call on the name by faith. So, Moses just needed to trust in and depend on this awesome name of God; There was nothing for him to worry. However how was his response?

**II. “Now go; I will help you.” (4:1-17)**

Look at verse 4:1, “Moses answered, ‘What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you.’?” When Moses heard God’s plan, he was very reluctant and here we come to know why he was reluctant. Mostly, it was because of his fear of his own people’s rejection. This fear shows how deeply his own people’s rejection of him in the past affected his life. It is true. Fear of rejection is one of the devil’s strongest weapons against the servants of God. The LORD understood Moses’ fear. So, to help Moses, he showed two signs; the sign of changing his shepherd staff into a snake and the sign of changing his hand skin to leprous skin and restoring them back. And thirdly the LORD also promised him that with his shepherd staff he would be able to change the water of the Nile river into blood to convince the Israelites that God had sent him indeed.

But Moses was still not convinced that it would be enough. In verse 4:10, Moses brought another complaining to God. “Moses said to the LORD, ‘Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.’” According to Acts 7:22, Moses was powerful in speech and action because he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians as a prince. But now he totally forgot his past ability and had no confidence in himself. This time, the Lord rebuked Moses for his unbelief in verses 11-12, “Who gave human beings their mouth? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.” Yet Moses continued to complain. “Lord, please send someone else!” Then the LORD’s anger burned against Moses but again God understood Moses’ deep agony; his broken self-confidence that he could not speak well eloquently. So he prepared Moses’ brother Aaron to help Moses. With this, finally Moses agreed to obey God’s calling.

So in today’s passage, we learn that Moses’ brokenness, sense of inadequacy, sense of unworthiness, and sense of failure and despair were so deep that he couldn’t have any self-confidence for God’s mission. So he was very reluctant, complained, and made excuses not to do God’s mission. But what an amazing grace it is that Moses’ total brokenness and sense of inadequacy were the very perfect condition for God to call him and use him for his mission because now with his total brokenness he could truly depend on God alone by faith humbly and patiently. As we see how God calls and commissions totally-broken Moses for his mission, we come to know that our human failure and brokenness are not the end of our life. Rather they are the perfect condition in which we can start over our new life of mission in God with the absolute hope and faith in him not from us. Personally, this grace of God really touches me a lot because after a long time of my life of faith and mission, I have lost my self-confidence and because of that, honestly speaking, sometimes I have been even reluctant to obey God’s mission. But from today’s passage, I newly learn that for God’s mission, my lack of self-confidence, inadequacy, and my shortcomings do not matter and what matters is that I believe in him who calls me in spite of all my shortcomings and is surely with me and helps me in every aspect of my life.

In conclusion, today we learned God sees his people’s agony and hear their cry and he called Moses when he thought he was really unworthy and not sufficient for God’s mission. It was God’s wisdom and love because with his total brokenness he could truly depend on God alone by faith in humility and patience and then all glory goes to God alone. Now I pray this same grace of God may be with each of us. Amen.

Big idea: God calls us when we think we are most unqualified!