

Sermon
16 November 2014
West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

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Text: Exodus 3:1-8a, 11-12a & 4:10-17

Profession of faith

Excuses. Something most of us are very good at!

In the Church of Scotland, today is Guild Sunday, and the Guild theme for the year is: 'A world to serve'. God wants us to serve the world. God asks us to serve the world. The correct response to this should be: "Yes Lord!"

God sent Moses to serve his own nation, to obey God and to bring blessing to the whole world. But Moses was very reluctant to say "yes" to God, he was full of excuses. Despite the fact that God promised to be with him – God had to ask him again and again, and only eventually, when God almost lost his temper with Moses, he agreed to do what God wanted him to do.

When I read this story in the Bible, it reminded me of a typical situation that plays off in my house almost every day – when I want the boys to do something and they don't want to. It starts off with me asking nicely. "Henro and Nehan, will you please tidy up your room?" *Now in my mind, that's not an unreasonable request – after all, it's them who made the*

mess in the first place! And they have to learn responsibility somewhere...

To which I usually get: “Nooooo. We don’t want to!” Then I try to encourage them: “Come on boys, it’s needing done. I’ll help you.” “But we’re busy now Mummy! We are playing a very important game!”

At which time I raise my voice a little. “I’m not asking you again. Tidy up this room now!” And then the whining usually starts: “But why do we *always* have to tidy up?”

By then I usually start getting fed up with their excuses: “Go tidy up your room now. I’m *not* talking again! 1, 2, 3...”

And then, all of a sudden, they’re quite happy to do what they’ve been asked and they do it well. But why does it always have to be such an ordeal before we get to the point where they listen and do what they’re asked?!

God spoke to Moses. He said: “I see that my people are suffering in Egypt. I want to do something about that. The Pharaoh needs to get told that I want my people to leave his country.” “Brilliant idea!” Moses probably thought.

Until he realised that God wanted *him* to go tell this to Pharaoh. “Who, me?!” he said. “Who am I, that I should go to the Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” Moses doubted himself.

Although God promised to be with him, Moses doubted God too. “What if they ask by what authority am I doing this?” So God explained to him exactly what to say.

But then he started bombarding God with ‘*what if’s*’: “What if they don’t believe me? What if they don’t listen to me?” So God gave Moses signs that he could do to prove to the people that God sent him.

To which Moses replied: “I don’t speak well”. It’s almost as if you want to say to Moses: *Just get on with it already! Stop making excuses and just go do it!*

But what does he say? “O Lord, please send someone else...” To which God became angry and he said that he would send Moses’ brother Aaron with him, to help Moses do the talking.

And that was that. Just like a parent struggling with a naughty child, it took a long time before Moses agreed to do what God wanted him to do, but from then onwards it was a success story. Moses led the people of God out of Egypt to the Promised Land. And God never left his side for a second.

If Moses just took a few minutes to reflect on his life, he probably would have said yes much sooner – because for somebody reading his life story, it’s clear as daylight that from the very beginning God had a plan with his life.

God spared his life when he was a baby, God spared his life again later when he was an adult – God had plans for Moses.

God gave Moses the time, the opportunity, the resources, the assistance, the life-experience; everything he needed to do this job well. Everything that happened in his life up until now, the good and the bad, happened to prepare him for this, every single experience he's had, all led up to this point in his life. And by being obedient to God, Moses served the world. Eventually...

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You know how I often tell someone's life story here in church on a Sunday, just to bring the message home? Well, I don't want to do that today. I want all of you to think about your own lives for a few seconds. Think a little about your own journey through life – the journey that brought to you here today.... Can you see God's hand leading you? God wants *you* to serve the world in some way or another; otherwise you wouldn't have been here this morning.

So let's learn from the journey Moses was on, and just say "yes" straight away – because if God *wants* to use you for something, he *is going* to use you for it. And he will be at your side the whole time, so you don't ever have to feel that you are not up for the task.

Let's start living like obedient children of our loving Father. Let's say "yes" straight away, and then go do the best we can.

I read a quote in a book written by Charles Swindoll (The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart and 1,501 Other Stories. Nashville: Word, 1998, p. 189). It shows how very ridiculous the excuses we sometimes use in regards to church would sound if it was used elsewhere, by a football supporter, for instance. Have you ever wondered what would happen if people were as

committed to church as they are to sport? Listen how silly these excuses, used very often in relation to church, would sound if it was used in relation to football:

“Every time I went they asked for money.

The people with whom I had to sit didn’t seem very friendly.

The seats were too hard and uncomfortable.

The coach never came to see me.

The referee made a decision with which I could not agree.

I was sitting with some hypocrites – they only came to see what others were wearing.

Some games went into overtime, and I was late getting home.

The band played numbers that I had never heard before.

The games were scheduled when I want to do other things.

My parents took me to too many games when I was growing up.

I don’t want to take my children, because I want them to choose for themselves what sport they like best.”

Puts things into perspective, doesn’t it?

God has given the courage to say “YES” to him this morning. Yes, they want to serve him; yes, they want to serve the world. Let’s support them on this new turn their journeys took with them today, and say “yes” too, without any hesitation, because whether it is a small job or a big job God wants you to do – it’s very important, because otherwise he wouldn’t have asked in the first place.

Amen