

**Exodus 3:1-4:17**

**God calls and equips imperfect people for his glory.**

A promise has been given and the people are waiting on it. Waiting for it to come to pass... and it probably felt like forever, the waiting. Then something changes in the atmosphere... and there is fire, a flame that is not consuming, the sign that the promise has come. God empowers for his purpose... Of course this is not our old story of Moses and the burning bush but that of Pentecost and outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the birth of the church.

A people sent on a mission, to make disciples, to become the church. In that upper room there is an ignition that sets the world ablaze... it is our founding story. And the same ignition takes place in the calling and equipping of Moses - the mediator between God and his people - and as we think about it this morning, this calling and equipping is the model for the church, for us, still today.

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The backstory is brief, Israel as a people had multiplied and what was influence in the days of Joseph had become slavery under Egyptian lords. For some 400 years the people groaned under the burden of the taskmasters. Waiting... trying to remember the promise God gave to the patriarchs.

Born into danger and this oppression comes a boy named Moses. Weaned by his mother and made part of Pharaoh's house. He knows his roots and stands up for a Hebrew being harassed, killing an Egyptian. He runs away to the wilderness... is given a wife and labors as a shepherd for forty years when he walks upon this fire... the bush that is not consumed by the fire.

This is the calling of Moses as the mediator between God and his people. The God who has remembered his promise to deliver the people, chooses to accomplish his work through a man in hiding... a mere shepherd. As we hear of God's plan to use Moses we also want to recognize how the church now in Christ is called and equipped in the same way.

**1) Moses as Mediator**

This is a call - a giving of life purpose - that is in light of the covenantal promises of God. God heard the people's cries for help and now he has come deliver Israel out of the hand of Egypt. How amazing is it that God is speaking?!

His plan involves Moses, and it is through him that God will speak to Israel and to the king of Egypt... “Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” (ESV)

The purpose of this exodus is worship... Saved in order to serve at this mountain. Freedom from Egypt was not freedom for the sake of freedom but freedom to fall on their faces and worship God as he deserves to be worship. God’s desire is for his glory; “I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

And we expect this result, the glory of God, but we can still be surprised by who he calls and our whole text is the conversation between Moses and God about how he is not capable of the call. There is something of all of us in Moses.

God’s call of Moses is a vivid reminder of how we are all called to serve the living God. Moses’ hesitant response has a familiar ring to it!

It is in Moses’ excuses that we catch how God works... five reasons why he is not the man for the job. And five responses of God’s sufficiency, even in using imperfect people.

**a) Who am I?** Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out? We might look from the safe distance of history and see Moses as well equipped for the task - he has had experience in the royal house and is a Hebrew. He seems a logical bridge between the two... but now a shepherd far removed from that life... he sees the enormity of the task and pauses before it.

God’s response is “but I will be with you.” This by itself is the only thing that matters. To have the Creator of the universe, the only true God, with you. Your status doesn’t matter, your perspective of yourself doesn’t matter... it is that God is with you.

**b) Who is God?** If I go to the people and say the God of your father’s has sent me, who do I tell them you are - what’s your name?

Is it that Moses doesn’t know the personal name of God? Moses’ request for God’s name is important because the Israelites believed that the name reflected an individual’s essence.

In the Egyptian pantheon of gods, how is the true God to stand apart... “I am who I am...” The LORD, Yahweh has sent you... God’s personal name. That he would be “personal” is amazing in itself... He can be known. “I will be...” translated... in relation to his promise to be with Moses this is a clear reminder of God’s promises to his people and of his help for them to fulfill their calling. His sufficiency even in giving his name.

At his name is the unfolding of the plan, he is to go in the name of God and speak not only to the leaders of the people, to tell of the destination, but also go to Pharaoh and Yahweh will stretch

out his mighty hand to deliver them. Such a miraculous event even the women will get some shopping in, silver, gold, clothing...

This must be enough!

**c) Credibility.** They won't believe me... the people will think I have made it all up. Notice Moses doesn't question the plan of redemption or God's power and promise - he doesn't say - 'there is no way we will get out and people will not give us their jewelry!'

It is that the people won't believe he has had an encounter with God. That he speaks on his behalf. So God in his power, gives signs. The staff that becomes a serpent, which at first rightly freaks Moses out - we don't know which kind of snake but given the Egyptian obsession with the cobra perhaps that is it - all the more when God says to grab it by its tail - you don't pick up a snake (poisonous) by the tail... it is a show of dominance.

The leprous hand - diseased and healed. If those don't work, then water from the Nile turning to blood. God is hinting at some of the signs to come - as he stretches out his arm.

Moses won't have to do the convincing, the God that is with him will do it, through his power...

**d) Inadequacy.** Still, all of Yahweh's power and presence aside, Moses says he can't do it... He is not eloquent... He don't talk so good.

**Exodus 4:11-12** "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." (ESV)

Do you realize who you are working for?! Your adequacy is determined by God, your ability given by him.

Okay, go already! Surely this is enough. God is enough...

**e) Abdication.** Just send someone else! The anger of God is kindled... not that he is impatient, but there is continued denial of his sufficiency, his sovereignty and his power.

Yet again he provides. Moses I won't send someone else, but I will send someone with you. Who will speak for you.

As we turn the page Moses finally goes. He returns and the story plods on, the redemption of God's people being worked out by God, by his power, through Moses... an imperfect person, maybe not qualified, certainly not sure of himself, called and equipped.

This is our story, called by God to do something - and our typical response is "who am I... I can't do this... get someone else..."

This text shows us that God is enough. Moses was insufficient but God is self-sufficient. God responded to each excuse with statements about his own sovereignty and power. This is what his people need a vision for!

A.W. Tozer “God needs no one, but when faith is present he works through anyone.”

The promise is at hand, the imperfect mediator is equipped.

Another mediator would come... and there would be another similar conversation... not one of inadequacy but of burden. Not burning bush but a burning in his heart as unto death...

**Matthew 26:39** “And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” (ESV)

A grander redemption being executed. The salvation of not just one family, but all who will believe. The establishment of a true king over all others. Jesus. Nevertheless, your will be done.

He would boldly then follow that will and be hung on a cross to meet the wrath of God against sin... dying as a substitute for us. The perfect mediator between God and man. Raised to life in victory. Calling and equipping those that believe in him.

## **2) The Church in Christ**

This is us now... Saved to serve, to live with purpose, to take this message of the final, perfect mediator everywhere... not waiting on the promise but living it out, redeemed. And not waiting for a burning bush. Given a call and equipped by the same God that was with Moses...

**Matthew 28:18-20** “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)

All authority, all power is mine... I will be with you... I am sufficient for what I have called you to do. As a sign...

**Acts 2:1-4** “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. [2] And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. [3] And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. [4] And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (ESV)

“Who has made man’s mouth?! I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak...”  
Preaching of Christ, in power... **Luke 24:47** “that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations...”

This is our call as those that believe in Jesus - to make him known. That people would worship him... no longer on his mountain, but everywhere.

We might have our list of excuses... but each is answered. If we were to add one it would be 'Jesus, I just don't have time to follow you... or to tell others of you.'

The command is 'as you go,' there is no need of more hours but of right perspective and recognition of opportunities... and probably less time wasted... Catching a vision of the richness and goodness of Christ, that it shapes how we live.

Just like Moses we move forward...

- Knowing God is with us
- That we are part of the plan of I AM
- Gospel is our credibility
- Resourced, gifted
- Partners

This changes our perspective on what obedience is, not a burden from a different taskmaster, but an empowered existence.

Not only as a church but as individuals. You are exactly who he wants to use... **God calls and equips imperfect people for his glory.** When it comes down to being prepared or capable... It's not about you. It's about God. And he works through you to do what he will do!

"If I belong to Jesus' Church, I've been deputized. . .authorized. . .and mobilized to bring light into this dark world." Gordon Dabbs

**Get in:** Believe in Jesus. That he is the I AM. That he died in your place and now has given you a purpose of making him known to your neighbors and this world. Repent.

**Get Going:** Start with prayer. Align with purpose. Experience power.

So what do we tell people as God's missionaries? We tell tell them who God is, and we tell them what God has said. This includes what he has done in the past, what he is doing in the present, and what he will do in the future.

What sign do we have? Our sign is an empty tomb! The empty tomb is the sign that Christianity is true, and so is God's Word. He is alive!

If you feel as though God is sending you to do something beyond yourself, the key is to take your eyes off of your failures and weaknesses. Get a vision of God, of his sovereignty, of his power. And his promise of success.

John Calvin “however slow and unwilling we may naturally be to obey God, we must not turn away from any command when he assures us of success, because no stimulus can be stronger than the promise that his hand shall be always ready to help us when we follow whither he calls us.”

Once Moses saw it he went... the church in Acts 2 saw it, they heard the promise of success by the work of the Spirit.

At Pentecost we celebrate the gospel being preached, people called to repentance and becoming part of the church. Christ being glorified. It was in a room of ordinary people... imperfect people, empowered by God.

Wanting to close with a story of one such imperfect disciple, like us... but that’s all there is! God has only ever used imperfect people, and he wants to use you. He wants to use us for his glory.