RELUCTANT BUT FAITHFUL

by

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November 14, 2021 (New Life MCC)

Scripture – Exodus 3:7-12

I’ve shared with you before how, as a child of 12, I felt the call of God to ministry in a dream I had. I’ve shared how I set being a pastor as my professional goal until Junior High School (sorry, I’m old so when I went to Junior High School they didn’t have Middle School) when I got side tracked with architectural engineering, vet school, and entomology.

Yet God remained faithful, even though I didn’t want to do what God wanted me to do. God let me continue on my journey but stayed by my side, always nudging me a little closer to my Creator’s will.

Then in September 1995 God bumped me and got my attention on my Walk to Emmaus and soon thereafter said to my soul, ‘No more excuses. You must do it now.’ So, I accepted the call to ministry and proceeded forward in faith.

As a child, I really didn’t have any reason to say no to God’s call. But as an adult, I found a lot of excuses not to say yes. Among the excuses I gave God were:

* I am not qualified.
* I just don’t have what it takes to lead people to do what you wanted them to do.
* I am so imperfect.
* I am not good enough as I was raised to believe that to be a minister you had to be a “real good person” and I just wasn’t that “good a person”.

To be faithful to God’s will in our lives is never easy. It requires us to let go of ourselves and to ‘let God’. That is, we have to deny ourselves, get out of our comfort zones, and step out in faith so God can control our lives. That, my friends, is extremely hard to do.

Today’s lesson is going to focus on how God takes our reluctance and nudges it from time to time to get us to respond in faith. Today we are going to look at a familiar ‘soldier of faith’ and how God nudged him to make those decisions to do what God wanted him to do. Today we are going to look at Moses and see just how much he is like us.

You remember in Exodus 2, Moses mother set him upon the waters of the Nile in a reed basket, or ark if you will, to save him from the pharaoh’s edict to throw all the Hebrew male children into the river to become food for the crocodiles.Tradition has it that he grew up in Pharaoh’s court and became much admired and respected by the people of Egypt for his knowledge and wisdom. He felt secure, loved, and felt he had a purpose. I’m sure he had many friends and probably the best friend among them all was his half-brother, Ramses.

As they grew up, I’m sure they had their conflicts, fights, and disagreements. But I’m also sure they grew to love each other over time. So, when Moses had to kill an Egyptian that was beating a Hebrew and had to flee from Egypt, it had to not only hurt him to leave his country, but it also had to hurt him that he had to leave his brother whom he loved.

Tough decisions. We are no different. Through-out our lives we have to make tough decisions to leave loved ones because of circumstances – circumstances that we may or may not have brought upon ourselves. We have to leave none the less. Many times, that leaving is a step of faith because, like Moses, we don’t know where we are going. And we don’t know what will happen to us. Oh, we will have a destination like Moses – the wilderness. Our wilderness may be a job or a location but we still are going into a wilderness full of unknowns. Our move is one of faith that many times takes a lot of pain with it.

And then Moses found the burning bush and God called him to go back to Egypt and lead the Hebrews from bondage as God would reveal to pharaoh who the true God is through many signs and wonders. Moses, however, comes up with all the excuses as to why he is ‘not the man’ for the job. Moses was afraid of Egypt because it held death for him to return. The pharaoh’s court was also full of death traps. I’m sure that Moses wife, Zipporah, was fearful for his safety and did not want him to return. Therefore, Moses was reluctant.

We are reluctant. How many times are we reluctant to do what God wants us to do? We find all kinds of excuses. All of them are lame but we think they are good. We think we can change God’s mind. Moses thought he knew what was better for himself than God did. Don’t we do the same? Moses was reluctant but he was faithful. Even though he didn’t want to go, he did go because he knew in his heart that God’s will is always the best. We, too, must learn the same lesson,

We need to look at our life. We need to reflect back at the time we had to make the hardest decisions of our life.

- Maybe it was leaving home to live with someone our parents didn’t approve of.

- Maybe it was going off to serve our country in war and having to leave our family behind, not knowing if we would ever see them again.

- Maybe it was having to move away from home because of a job, lack of a job, or a relationship.

- Maybe it was having to put one or both of our parents in a nursing care facility because they, and we, couldn’t take care of their needs properly and they never forgave us for ‘deserting them’.

- Maybe it was having to go through breaking up of a relationship with someone we dearly loved and we didn’t understand why they lost their love for us.

- Maybe it was having to face the death of a loved one whom we just didn’t know how we were going to live without because they were such a big part of us.

- Maybe it was having to face the rejection of our family when we decided to follow Jesus.

Maybe it was some other difficult decision. You know what I mean here. During those times when tough decisions have to be made, we tend to be reluctant. We tend to not want to decide but because ‘life has to go on’, we have to decide and decide we do. And we will continue to have to make those tough decisions. But we must be like Moses, not making excuses, but make our decision in the knowledge and faith that our God will be with us.

Jesus told us in Matthew 28:20, “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” And in Hebrews 13:8 the writer says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” We do not have to fear whether God will be with us. Through the tough times and all the times, the Scripture tells us that Jesus is with us. Always. And I suspect that most of us, if we were asked by someone on the street, would answer in the affirmative that we believed that to be true.

But do we really believe it? To believe it means we must be willing to walk in faith. To walk in faith means to trust God when the tough decisions need to be made and to seek God’s guidance in those decisions. To walk in faith means we say YES to removing ourselves from our comfort zone and to go and do things that our logic says we can’t or aren’t qualified to do. Jesus even did it when He was struggling in the Garden of Gethsemane as recorded in Mark 14:32-42. Jesus’ humanity didn’t want to die. He was reluctant but He was faithful and said yes to God’s request to die for our sins.

One of the most powerful qualities of the Holy Scriptures is that people God works with, and through, are no different than us. We can identify with them. Therefore, their stories are our stories. We can see how God changed them for the better and we believe God can change us for the better. And God will, if we ‘let go and let God’.

Reluctant but faithful. I pray that both parts of that description can be said of us.

In Jesus Name. Amen.