

Text: Acts 3:1-8; 4:8-15

Title: "Who Me?"

Introduction: I just love the story of Moses. Here is a Reader's Digest-type version from Exodus 1-4: The Hebrew people are slaves in Egypt. Why? Because after Joseph and all of his brothers and their families died there, the Hebrew people continued to multiply ... until there were more Hebrews than Egyptians in Egypt (at least that's how the Egyptians leaders saw it). The Egyptians got nervous and decided that they had to do something so that the Hebrews would not overtake them in their own land. The new Pharaoh, who did not know anything about Joseph rescuing the people of Egypt, decided to make the Hebrew people slaves instead of citizens.

Anyway, the Hebrews have now been slaves for about 400 years, but they are still multiplying. Pharaoh decides to have all of the newborn Hebrew boys thrown into the Nile River and drowned. Moses is born, his life is spared and he is raised by Pharaoh's daughter. Later in life, Moses figures out that he is Hebrew and starts to defend his own mistreated people ... gets himself into trouble and flees Egypt. He is somewhere around the age of 40.

Ends up in the land of Midian, gets married to Miriam and works for his Father-In-Law, Jethro. Moses becomes a shepherd for Jethro and works out in the fields. When Moses is about 80 years old, he comes across a burning bush out in the wilderness. Weird thing is, the bush is burning, but not burning up.

Moses hears God speak to him while he is next to that bush. Essentially, he says to Moses that he has heard his plea and that He agrees. The Hebrew people have been in slavery long enough. It's time to go and get them out! Moses, I'm sure, says, "Yeah! Great idea, God! Do that. Bring my blood relatives out of Egypt and set them free!" And God says, "No. You! You, Moses ... you bring them out of Egypt."

At this time, I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our scripture that we will get to in a little while. On the other is an outline of how we are going to continue to work on living this life the way God wants us to, complete with fill-in-the-blanks. My hope is that as you take time to fill in the blanks, which will help us retain what we have learned today about how God wants us to experience WHOLE LIFE in this life, you will continue to grow in your faith.

Here is where the fun begins. Moses sees a need and wants it done (freeing enslaved people), but did not expect God to ask HIM to do anything about it! Moses thinks about it for a split-second and then starts in with the excuses...

Here is God, talking to Moses by a burning bush that is not burning up. God wants more than anything for Moses to experience WHOLE LIFE! God wants Moses to live out the Power of God and go on this great adventure and work alongside of Himself. ***God wants Moses to really LIVE!***

Meanwhile, Moses is working his tail off trying to find ways out of it! Here come Moses excuses ...

1. "Who am I?" Moses did not feel like he was good enough, smart enough, or strong enough to take on such a task. Moses sort of forgot his upbringing and focused on the last 40 years tending sheep. "Who am I?"

2. *“Who is sending me?”* Moses knows that the Hebrew people will only follow him if they know that Moses is sent by God. They are not going to follow Moses because he is a good sheep herder up in Midian.
3. *“They are not going to believe me!”* The Hebrew people have not heard from their God for over 400 years (while they were in slavery), why would they believe that God sent Moses to speak for God?
4. *“I am not gifted enough to do this”*. We’ll get to this one later!

Well, after the 3rd excuse about the Hebrew people not believing that God would send Moses, God stops the argument and gives Moses an object lesson. God begins by asking Moses a very important question. “Hey, Moses, what is that in your hand?”

I. The Question

This is one of the most important questions that we can hear God asking us in this life. It seems like a simple question, but if we are going to experience WHOLE LIFE the way God wants us to, we need to hear God asking us, “What is that in your hand?”

Most of us, when we hear God ask, love to answer with...

A. “That’s Nothing”

1. God asks Moses, “Moses, what is that in your hand?”
“Moses, you don’t believe that I can do the things I want to accomplish (free Hebrew slaves in Egypt) through you. Let’s start simple...”
2. Moses looks down and sees that he is holding his shepherd’s staff. Moses says, “This is my shepherd’s staff. I use it to protect and assist the sheep.”
3. God says, “Right, Moses. It is something you use every day. You have had that for awhile and you need it for your everyday work. Now, throw it on the ground.”
4. Moses throws his staff on the ground and it immediately becomes a snake. Guess what Moses does? Like most of us, he runs the other way!”
5. God says to Moses, “Grab the snake by the tail.” Do Not Try This At Home, by the way. With a whole lot of faith, Moses grabs the snake by the tail and it immediately turns back into his staff.

Let’s Pray!

B. Who Me?

1. When it comes to who God chooses and who God uses to build His Kingdom here, most of us think that God just uses those people with tremendous skills and ability ... the people that stand out!
2. If God would ask you and I to do anything huge like He asked Moses, our response would probably be, “WHO ME?”
3. But this question that God asks, really takes away the idea that only those with great ability will be used by God.

4. See, God loves you and wants you just the way you are. Remember that God is not only looking at what you are, but what you can be in His hand.

C. Answer the Question

1. So, regardless of what you think of yourself; ANSWER THE QUESTION! What do you have in your hand? What do you have to offer to God?
2. Imagine what it could be if God got a hold of it!
3. Think of what skills you have. Think of what talents you have. Think of your abilities. Think of what resources you have. Think of the people that you know. What are you willing to lay in front of God?!?
4. Remember Moses? That shepherd's staff was just a shepherd's staff until Moses let go of it! Once God got a hold of the ordinary stuff of Moses, it became extraordinary!
5. So, answer the question! Think right now ... what do I have in my hand? What do I have that God can use?
6. Maybe you don't think of you talents and resources as extraordinary, but "What do you have in your hand?"
7. Let's take the question one step further ... "What do you have in your hand that you are willing to lay before God?"
8. This is extremely personal. Not one of us can answer these questions for anyone else. We can only answer for ourselves.
9. As long as we are in question mode, why don't you ask yourself if you are too afraid to have your "ordinary" turned into "extraordinary" ...?

II. Spiritual Gifts

Now, before we get too carried away just thinking about our abilities, talents and resources, there is something else we need to consider. If we are going to experience WHOLE LIFE in this life, we also have to take into account our SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

A. Not Just Talent

1. In Romans 12, Paul describes Spiritual Gifts and explains their purpose ... it goes like this:

³ As God's messenger, I give each of you this warning: Be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you. ⁴ Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, ⁵ so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.

⁶ God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out when you have faith that God is speaking through you. ⁷ If your gift is that of serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, do a good job of teaching. ⁸ If your gift is to encourage others, do it! If you have money, share it generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

¹*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. 1997 (Ro 12:2). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House.

2. Paul reminds us in this Scripture that we need each other ... we need to work together (Constellation of Stars!) as ONE BODY to accomplish what God calls us to do as a Church.
 3. We could spend two weeks on Spiritual Gifts, but I invite you to go to _____ to find a pretty complete list of Spiritual Gifts.
 4. Then the question comes, how do I know that I have a Spiritual Gift? Answer: *we all do!* The Holy Spirit (God) gives each of us Spiritual Gifts, and at the time that we give our lives to God (ask forgiveness of sins and vow to do life the way God wants us to), God unlocks those gifts for use.
 5. Kind of like in video games, where the best race tracks and cars and areas and clothes and stuff are locked. And you can't get to them until you pass a certain level... When we give our lives to Christ, our Spiritual Gifts are unlocked for use for the Kingdom!
 6. How do I know what my Spiritual Gift mix is?
 7. First, take a Spiritual Gifts survey ... those are helpful ... or, take a class on Spiritual Gifts, but then...
- B. "ABCDE"
1. Awareness – Study the Bible and know what it says about Spiritual Gifts...
 2. Belief – Trust that God has given you Spiritual Gifts to be used to serve God. Only by FAITH do we use our Spiritual Gifts.
 3. Confirmation – Pray and ask God to help you see your Spiritual Gift mix. Understand that God uses the people around you to confirm your mix.
 4. Discernment – Don't confuse natural talent with Spiritual Gifts, but know that you can use your natural talent in serving God's Kingdom as well.
 5. Exercise – Not going to know what you have until you practice it. If you sense you have certain Spiritual Gifts, try them out! Gift of Encouragement = Encourage the people around you. Gift of Service = Start Serving...
- C. Ask Questions
1. Then start asking questions to make sure you are being part of the BODY, like God wants you to.
 2. "What does it seem like to me that I am equipped to do?"
 3. "What are my most significant Spiritual Desires?"
 4. "What are the needs that I am most moved to meet?"
 5. "Do others (spiritual leaders) recognize my Spiritual gift mix and respond to them?"

Okay, to our Scripture for today... you thought I forgot!

READ ACTS 3:1-8 NOW!

Do you know what Peter and John did next? They followed the healed man into the Temple and Peter began preaching about the power of Jesus Christ bringing healing; not them! They told about Jesus being crucified and coming back to life. They tell the people and the church leaders that Jesus is going to come again. They remind them that Moses and the all the prophets starting with Samuel spoke about the miracles that are happening ... including the healing of the crippled beggar.

Guess what the Church Leaders did? They arrested Peter and John and put them in jail for the night!

Then next day, they bring Peter and John before the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law in Jerusalem. Then they ask this question ... "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this (the healing of the crippled man)?" What a great question! And Peter has an answer...

READ ACTS 4:8-15 NOW!

v. 13 = "The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were *ordinary men who had had no special training.*"

Do you remember who Peter and John are? They are fishermen from Galilee ... blue collar workers from the poor part of the country! Remember, Jesus said to Peter and his brother Andrew, John and his brother James, "Come with me and I will make you fishers of people!"

Don't tell me you are too ordinary! "But Pastor Stan..." Jesus put the hope of the Christian faith in the hands of *commercial fishermen*. Don't tell me that God cannot use you for the Kingdom!

BUT, notice it also said in verse 13 that the council recognized that Peter and John had been with JESUS!

Here's what I'm trying to say: God can and will use you if you will let Him. It really doesn't matter how "ordinary" you feel. God does not see you as *ordinary*. God sees each one of us as *significant!*

III. God's Call

A. First Call

1. God calls each one of us. Our First Call, of course, is to a faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Please understand that you are going to miss out on the adventure of God's call in your life if you are still living life the way you want and attending worship on Sunday. That doesn't work.
3. Until you are OBEДИENT to God (Jesus is Lord), don't expect anything else.

B. Call to Service

1. I wonder what Jesus looked like. I wonder what it was about Jesus, as he walked the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, that made Andrew run and find his brother...
2. Andrew went and found Peter and said, "I've met this Jesus that everyone is talking about. He is the Messiah. But, Peter, it's okay! He's not weird. He's one of us."

3. What was it about Jesus that made Andrew, Peter, James and John (fisherman) leave their lives behind ... their families behind and blindly follow Him?
 4. “Come with Me and I will help you fish for people. Then, I’m going to leave and you all are going to be in charge of the Church. Make sure people all over the world hear about me and know that I am the Son of God.”
 5. In serving Jesus, there are 3 things we need to be aware of:
- C. #1 = Spiritual Confidence
1. I love Peter and John’s confidence in what they are doing and by Who’s power!
 2. Can you imagine the confidence it took to be up on the Temple Mount and say to a beggar, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!”?
 3. What if it didn’t happen? I don’t think there was any thought of that!
 4. Can you imagine standing in front of religious leaders who were the ones who killed Jesus and saying that you are there in the name of Jesus?
 5. Peter and John had NO DOUBT about Who they were serving ... do we?
- D. #2 = Spiritual Conformity
1. When we talk about Spiritual Conformity, we are talking about conforming to Jesus Christ.
 2. We need to ask ourselves consistently if we are becoming more like Jesus Christ. Do people get a glimpse of who Jesus is when they experience me?
 3. Am I still following Jesus in all areas of my life?
 4. The religious leaders wanted Peter and John to stop using Jesus name and stop preaching about Jesus being the Messiah ... BUT, Peter and John chose to keep preaching Jesus even if it put their lives in danger (vs. 19-20).
- E. #3 = Spiritual Conviction
1. When it comes to God’s calling on your life, are you convinced and convicted of Who God is, who you are, and what your reason for living is?
 2. When we talk about “(W)hole Life”, we are not talking about an endless ‘to do’ list. We are talking about endless blessings from God as we take our eyes off of ourselves and search out ways to serve God’s Kingdom ... God’s children.

Next Week: Know what you’ve got, use your stuff, and 7 things to never forget...

Let’s Pray!