

Reflection on the calling of Moses

Passage: Exodus, chapters 3 and 4

The calling of Moses in Exodus chapters 3 and 4 is one of the most striking passages and important moments in the Biblical Story. God appears to Moses at the burning bush. It is a holy moment. God reveals his mission, to rescue the Hebrew people out of Egypt. This is indeed Good News ... until, that is, God reveals that he wants to send Moses to implement and share in this deliverance. That is when the excuses start. Moses contends that he could not possibly be the right person. We would find it comical if it was not so painfully close to home for so many. How many times have we used similar excuses before God, rationalising that the Almighty has somehow got it wrong.

In the middle of this discussion, God asks Moses a very important question: 'What is in your hand?' Moses' shepherd's staff is in his hand. It is a symbol of his gifts, his skills, his occupation, how he spends his time. In our imagination we can picture Moses getting up each morning and walking with that staff as he shepherds the sheep under his care. At this point he may have been doing this for forty years. The staff, in one sense is a symbol of what Moses can do, what he can uniquely offer. Might we ask the same question of ourselves: What is in our hand? What is it that we can do or offer?

The interesting thing is that God next asks Moses to give him the stick, hand it over, surrender it by casting it on to the ground. On the ground, in front of the burning bush it is now in the hands of God. It turns into a snake. God invites Moses then to pick the snake up by the tail, and it returns to being a stick.

What can we learn from this? Perhaps there are a few thoughts that might be useful to think about in terms of God's call on our lives. Firstly, God is as much on mission today as he was in the day of Moses, and still invites the ordinary people of this world to surrender who they are and what they can do to him, to place all into his hand. In Methodist language, to live out of our covenant prayer.

Secondly, it is our availability and not our ability that matters. In fact, when we think we can carry out the calling of God on our own, when we rely on our own ability, we miss out on so much of what might be possible through partnering up with God. What is in your hand? Make it available to God.

Thirdly, when you do surrender all that you are, have and can do to God, it is amazing what God can do with it. Using our imaginations once again can we see that staff in Moses' hand as he makes his way to connect with his brother? Perhaps it is in his hand as he walks into the presence of Pharaoh and says 'let my people go!'. Perhaps it is in his hand as those plagues are enacted, or as he embarks in leadership of the people in their Exodus from Egypt. Was it in his hand when the sea was parted? We're told that he struck a rock and water came from it along the way? Did he carry it to help him climb Sinai to collect the tablets of stone inscribed with the law? Did he have it in his hand when he took in the view of the promised land just before his death? The point is simple: when you surrender who you are, what you've got, and what you can do to God, you have no idea or control over what God might do with it.

As we conclude, what would it look like if you put what is in your hand and made it available to God? Like the Magi of Exodus 2 it might involve walking further than we perhaps initially thought and for a longer time than we ever imagined in our pursuit of walking with God. Are you ready to respond to the call and take up the invitation to an adventure with God?

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