

Can You Hear Me Now?  
Pastor Arley K Fadness  
Second Wednesday of Lent  
February 20, 2008

Exodus 3:1-10

One day my second son, Joel, did something naughty and I caught him and I confronted him, "Joel, did you do this?" His reply was, "Dad, I didn't do it – **my hand did.**"

Ever use an **excuse** when your hand got caught in the cookie jar? I know I have.

Listen to these actual **excuse notes** that parents wrote in Albuquerque, New Mexico for their kids missing school:

- Dear School: Please excuse John from being absent on January 28, 29, 31, 32 and 33.
- Please excuse Brian for being. It was his father's fault.
- Please excuse Sara for being absent. She was sick and I shot her.
- Sally won't be in school a week from Friday. We have to attend her funeral.
- Please excuse Jennifer for missing school yesterday. We forgot to get the Sunday paper off the porch, and when we found it Monday, we thought it was Sunday.
- A pastor spoke to his deacon and said, "I'm told you went to the ball game instead of church this morning." "That's a lie," said the deacon, "and here's the fish to prove it."

In this Lenten series, we meet the great prophet – Moses.

Moses. Tribe of Levi. Family of Kohath. House of Amram.

We know Moses. Prince in Egypt, great Hebrew leader, Teacher, Lawgiver, Patriarch, Liberator – but few of us remember Moses, Holy Moses, as the **great excuse-giver!**

When I walk by that majestic bronze cast sculpture of Moses on the Augustana College campus just west of the Commons Building I feel a sense of awe. Michelangelo Buonarroti's Moses larger than life, powerful and intimidating seems godlike. But the Moses tonight, I can relate to. Human like me – Moses the **excuse-giver.**

Moses was not the only one in the Bible who said: "*My hand did it!*"

**Adam:** "it was the woman who gave me the fruit to eat."

**Eve:** "it was the serpent who told me to eat from the Tree of Knowledge."

**Jeremiah's** excuse to the call of God, "I'm only a boy."

**Gideon:** "I just come from a poor family of no stature."

**Jonah** offers no excuse at all but simply flees from God's call in the opposite direction from Nineveh. 3,000 – Tarshish.

Now **Moses** hears this voice speaking from a burning bush not consumed, in Midian. (We call this a theophany.) It is the voice of Deity, "*I have seen how the Egyptians oppress the Hebrews, so come Moses, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites out of Egypt.*"

And Moses replies, "Huh? Who me?"

Remember that old cell phone commercial, “*Can you hear me now?*” The assumption is that one can hear anyplace, anytime, in any situation on this near-miraculous omnipresent technology.

And when The Voice asks Moses, “*Can you hear me now?*” Moses scrambles for excuse after excuse for not answering and not hearing nor listening to God’s call.

1) **I am a nobody.** Who am I to go to Pharaoh? I am a mouse. Squeak, squeak. Ever felt that way? Once I served on a committee and everybody had the answers and nobody listened. I felt myself shrinking, smaller and smaller. I felt like a Zero. Charlie Brown suffering from low self-esteem moaned one day, “It goes all the way back to the beginning. The moment I was born and set foot on the stage of life they took one look at me and said, ‘Not right for the part.’”  
**I am a nobody.**

2) A second excuse Moses gives, **I am ignorant.** “*If they ask your name God, I don’t know what to say. I am dumb. I don’t have enough information. Not smart enuff.*” I tried that excuse when I headed for Luther Seminary. Would I survive French and Greek, ecclesiology, sotorieology eschatology, systematic theology homilectics, catechetics, internship?? But I went anyway and took my excuses to St Paul, Minnesota and Phoenix, Arizona. I survived, even thrived. And the Burning Bush’s answer to Moses, “*If they ask my name tell them I AM WHO I AM.*”

3) **I am not convincing.** “*Suppose they do not listen to me or believe me? I’m no salesman, no persuader.*” God whips out two signs: A staff turns into a snake and Moses’ hand turns white. “*Whoa. Okay,*” says Moses.

4) **I can’t talk.** I’m tongue tied. I’m afraid to speak in public. How many of us have hid behind that excuse? I did. Since I was not naturally gifted for public speaking I had to learn. So I preached my very first sermon while a senior in college. Went down to Alford, Iowa, to Christ Lutheran. It was hot. I was hot. So hot from the heat and nervousness my glasses began to fog over while I preached. Then I got more and more anxious because soon I would be blind and could not see my bible, notes, or hymnbook. Thankfully a breeze floated through the west window and I cooled and I was saved.

God says to Moses, “*I will give you Aaron. He can speak. Use him.*” Great leaders always gather around themselves those gifted with gifts he or she does not have.

5) Finally Moses concludes with the clincher excuse of all, **I’d rather not.**  
I am nothing. I am dumb. I am not convincing, I can’t speak, I’d rather not.

But the cell phone keeps ringing: The bush keeps burning: “*Can you hear me now?*”  
*For every excuse God has an answer. God provides a solution – for Moses – and for **you and me!***

Start with this: **You are somebody. You are not a nobody.** 1 John 3 says, “*If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts.*”

When we feel fearful, inadequate, small or shrinking, Paul says simply in 1 Corinthians, “*Consider your call.*”

William Willimon proclaims the truth about our call, *"In baptism we are initiated, crowned, chosen, embraced, washed, adopted, gifted, reborn, killed, and thereby redeemed. We are identified as one of God's own, then assigned our place and our job within the kingdom of God."*

### **You are Gifted**

A couple of Sunday's ago Pastor Dave said this in his sermon regarding our call to follow Jesus, *"We who are called by Christ are called to use the expertise and experience we have! We are called to do the things we love to do, the thing we do well."*

Wow! I wanted to jump up and shout Amen! Let's frighten our pastors, when they SPEAK gospel words – **loud Amen!** Let's practice. Amen

I've had such fun lately running around to congregations and helping them reflect on how God has created them and what their gifts are: I call it FINDING YOUR TRUE FLAIR. That's how God calls you through your gifts and passion. No more excuses. Well Moses moved beyond his excuses and the good news is you and I can too.