**BCM Bible Study: September 16/17, 2020**

**Exodus 4: God’s Preparation and Assurance**

Reflection: Review last week’s challenge:

1. Practice the Sabbath. Intentionally stop working for a day (or part of a day) to acknowledge that it is not you, but God who makes the world go round.
2. Unplug. Leave your phone behind and go outside to a quiet place to pray and be with God. Bring a journal if that helps keep your mind from wandering.

* What did you experience while practicing these things?

Moses’ Doubts

Take a moment to review Moses’ first two statements of doubt: **Read Exodus 3:11 & 13**

* How did God respond to these doubts?

**Read Exodus 4:1-9**

* The first sign involves the staff and the snake. The snake was representative of Egyptian royal authority. Knowing this, what does this sign communicate? (God has authority of Egyptian royalty)
* The second sign involves leprosy. We will learn in Leviticus that leprosy made someone unclean, thus preventing them from participating in worship. Knowing this, what does this sign communicate? (God and is the one who invites people into worship)
* In the eyes of the Egyptians (and practically speaking) the Nile was their life force. Blood is a symbol of life and blood. What is God communicating with this sign? (God is the authority of life and death)
* Overall, what do these signs communicate about the following three people: Pharaoh/Egypt and their gods (Pharaoh was considered a god), God, Israel.
  + Have you ever experienced the extraordinary work of God in your life? How does that serve as a reminder of his commitment to you?
* In the New Testament, Jesus discourages us from looking for signs like the ones he gives to Moses. That is not to say they will not happen; they are simply not the norm. **Read Matthew 12:38-40**.
  + What does Jesus say in response to the request for a sign? What sign does he give?
  + How are the cross and resurrection of Jesus a “sign” like the ones in Exodus?

**Read Exodus 4:10-17**

* Moses presents a reasonable concern in v.10 – what is it?
  + How does God respond in verses 11-12?
  + Peter Enns comments that “It is precisely in our inability that [God’s] light shines brightest in our hearts.” This recalls a famous verse – **Read 2 Corinthians 9:8-10.**
    - In what ways do you tend to feel inadequate to be used by God?
    - How might God shine through your own inadequacies?
    - God could have accomplished his mission by grand out-of-this-world signs. Instead, he uses common things – staff, skin disease, and water. In addition, he uses an ordinary man. How is this an encouragement to you?
* For the first 4 statements of doubt, God reacts patiently with Moses, but he becomes angry here. Why? What is different about v.13?
  + Despite God’s anger, how does he respond? How do you see God’s graciousness in this?
  + What does this teach us about God’s willingness to engage with our doubts and questions?
  + Do you feel like there are any ways that you are asking God to send someone else? What is driving that desire?

Moses Goes to Egypt: **Read Exodus 4:18-23**

* This is the first mention of God hardening Pharaoh’s heart. What are your thoughts about the idea of God hardening Pharaoh’s heart?
  + Go back and **read Exodus 3:19**. In what way does this verse portray who is hardening Pharaoh’s heart?
  + In this story, what assurance does this bring to Moses and the Israelites? (Everything is under God’s control).
  + While we may not understand all that God does, at the end of the day God’s sovereignty is a blessing because he is not only the potter (a sovereign God who shapes all things); he is the Father. Isaiah combines these images – **Read Isaiah 64:8.** Why is it important for you not to divorce these two aspects of God’s personality?
* God calls Israel his son. The New Testament calls us children of God. **Read Romans 8:14-17**. What does it mean that you are a child of God? Why is that significant for you?

**Read Exodus 4:24-31**

* Verses 24-26 are pretty odd! See below for more notes. In short, it seems that these verses suggest the importance of obedience since circumcision was the sign of the covenant with Abraham and a command for all of God’s people.
  + Peter Enns says the following: “Being a son…entails certain responsibilities in addition to privileges…it is a two-way street.”
  + What are some of the privileges and responsibilities that come with being God’s son or daughter?

Challenge

Take some time each day to express your unedited doubts, frustrations, hopes, or thoughts to God. Take note of any response you receive this week.

Extra Notes:

* Note that the shepherds staff becomes a sign of leadership for Israel. This is remarkable in light of Jesus being our Good Shepherd.
* Moses’ leprous hand is almost certainly not the leprosy that we think of today. If you read Leviticus, the leprosy they have in mind would potentially heal on its own, which is not the disease we call leprosy today. Still, it was a nasty infectious skin disease, and probably not very pleasant. It’s hard to know whether or not the leprosy of the New Testament is analogous to modern leprosy.
* We don’t know exactly what Moses is concerned about with regard to his speech. Does he have a speech impediment? Is his Egyptian rusty after 40 years away? We don’t know!
* Aaron is to Moses what Moses is to God. Each is the mouthpiece of the other. In fact, Aaron meeting Moses at Sinai so that Moses can fill him in on the plan is reflective of how God has interacted with Moses.
* That Aaron is a Levite (like Moses) will become significant when the law and priesthood are established.
* We don’t know why Moses says what he does in v.18. Is he being untruthful? If so, perhaps it is to expedite his mission? Or maybe he is nervous of Jethro’s reaction. We are left unsure.
* The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart presents a question – is this a comforting assurance for the Israelites? Wouldn’t it have been more of an assurance if Pharaoh had let them go right away? In the short term, that might have been true, but in the long run, what the Israelites witnessed in the plagues became crucial for their knowing that Yahweh is greater than the gods.
* Verses 24-26 are some of the most difficult verses to interpret in the OT. Who is the “him” in v.24? Why did Zipporah know what to do to appease God’s anger? Why did she touch his feet? What is a bridegroom of blood? If you would like me to send you more info on these verses, I can do so. In short, it seems that God is angry with Moses because he had not circumcised his son and Zipporah appeases God’s wrath by doing just that.