

September 3, 2017 – Who Am I?

Exodus 3:1-15

Last time we saw Moses, he was a baby in a basket and he had just been pulled out of the water of the Nile River. Obviously some years have passed and Moses is now an adult. So I'll give you a brief synopsis of what we've missed.. Moses was born into a Hebrew family, but he was adopted by the Egyptian Pharaoh's daughter and grew up in the Pharaoh's palace. As a young adult he witnessed an Egyptian overseer beating a Hebrew worker and Moses got so angry that he beat the Egyptian to death. Of course, the Pharaoh was furious and Moses had to flee his home in Egypt. He ended up in the wilderness of Midian where he was taken in by a pagan priest named Jethro. Eventually, Moses married one of Jethro's daughters.

In today's reading, Moses is tending his father-in-law's sheep and has led the flock to a mountain. It is there that Moses encounters the burning bush and hears the voice of God. God says, "I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt; I have heard their cries under those who oppress them; I have felt their suffering. Now I have come down to rescue them from the hand of Egypt, out of their place of suffering, and bring them to a place that is wide and fertile, a land flowing with milk and honey."

This would have been great news! Moses had seen first-hand that his people, the Israelites, were being oppressed in Egypt. The Pharaoh had ordered that they be forced into hard labour. Moses understood the need for them to be

rescued. But then God went on to say, “Now go! I will send you to Pharaoh, to bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” And Moses suddenly lost all the colour in his face and replied, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

“Who am I?” How many times have we asked ourselves that very question? What skills, abilities, education, experience do I have that would qualify me for this particular task? You want me to do what – to chair a committee, to organize a lunch, to facilitate a workshop, to visit someone in the hospital, to paint the church, to work the dishwasher, or to lead worship? There’s got to be somebody who could do this better than me! I’ve never done it before, I’m not even sure I can.

Moses continued his conversation with God and in Chapter 4 verses 1-15 we read:

“Then Moses said to the Holy One, “Please, my God, I am not good with words. I wasn’t yesterday, nor the day before, nor am I now, even after you spoke to me. I speak slowly, and with a wooden tongue.”

“YHWH replied,” Who taught people to speak in the first place? ... Now go! I myself will be with you when you speak. I will teach you what to say.”

But Moses said, “Please, my God, please send someone else. Not me.”

Moses may actually have had a good reason to say, “No” It’s possible that he had a real speech impediment. Maybe he stuttered or had a lisp. Maybe that “wooden tongue” meant that he had difficulty pronouncing some of the sounds in the Hebrew alphabet. We really don’t know. But what we do know is that despite, or maybe because of, any disability that Moses may have had, God chose him to free the Israelites from slavery.

The reality is that God calls people of all abilities. God doesn’t always call the person with the most education or experience or skills. God often calls the person who is available and willing and able (even if they don’t know it themselves).

I’ve been thinking a lot about differing abilities recently. Our Affirming Ministry Committee listened to the congregation and then chose Differing Abilities as their first topic of discussion in the affirming process. Early this summer a couple of our members approached the Abilities Council here in Swift Current to find out more about their work in the community. It has been a learning process for everyone on the committee as our eyes have been opened to the challenges and the opportunities that exist in our city for those with differing abilities.

This week I went to the Saskatchewan Abilities Council website and clicked on the section they call Inspiration. It was there that I found Sharon Braun’s story. Some of you may know Sharon because she lives here in Swift Current. Here’s a short excerpt off the website:

Last year, Sharon stepped outside her familiar Training Centre routine to volunteer at the local seniors centre... Sharon was hesitant at first, but staff members were quietly encouraging.It was a perfect choice. Visiting with residents at the centre quickly became a favourite activity. Sharon's face lights up when she sees the residents—some are old friends and co-workers from the Training Centre, some are brand new friends... Volunteering at the centre has given Sharon a sense of worth.

https://www.abilitiescouncil.sk.ca/html/inspiration/Sharon_Braun/index.cfm

Like you and I, Sharon was unsure of her call, unsure of her ability to help, afraid of failing. But she had the courage to try. Our local Abilities Council is encouraging many of their clients to volunteer so they can learn and appreciate the joy of helping others. There's a good chance that some of their clients will be volunteering here at our next Loose Change Supper. This coming week is the Saskatchewan Abilities Council Awareness Week and I invite you to take this opportunity to check their facilities and meet some of their staff and clients.

God calls people of all abilities. No matter who we are, we have something to offer others even if it's just a story or a laugh or a smile. God called a man named Moses, who claimed he had a "wooden tongue" and it was Moses who led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. Who knows what God may have in store for us.

MV #161 I Have Called You By Your Name