

During the last year or so, we've heard Pastor Jessie ask us “What is God calling you to do?” She's been asking me that question for longer than that!

Think about everything we face daily: jobs, finances, retirement, home maintenance and repairs, car maintenance and repairs, family obligations, covid 19, loss of loved ones and just plain trying to make sense of everything that's going on in this country.

How in the world are we supposed to put God first? How in the world are we supposed to figure out what God is calling us to do when all this STUFF is going on? As I pondered our current state of affairs on a personal level I thought “Maybe the question I should ask of myself is 'what is holding me back from hearing and feeling what God is calling me to do'?” Simply put, what is holding ME back from serving God first?

We will discuss 3 servants of the Lord. Our first is Moses. You know I've got to do some Old Testament! God got Moses' attention with the burning bush. God says you will lead my people out of bondage. And Moses does not willingly take up the call. In our scripture reading this morning we hear of Moses' lack of faith. He has little confidence. He asks God “What if they don't believe me?” God says He will provide Moses with the power to perform miracles and even tells him what to show the Israelites so they will believe. Moses answers God by saying “I am not eloquent and am slow in speech. God says I will help you. Even then Moses asks God to send someone else. And God gets MAD! But he doesn't take it out on Moses He says you have a brother Aaron that speaks well. I will tell you both what to say! But take your staff to perform miraculous signs. We know that Moses was a reluctant leader in the beginning. But we also know that he became one of the most powerful and decisive leaders in all of history.

What can we learn from this story? What similarities to Moses do we share? Have you ever felt a call to serve the Lord in a particular way yet just ignored it? Maybe reaching out to a friend or participating in some form of mission or just being kind to a stranger or even a friend or relative? One of our former pastors at Crozet UMC, Jim Chandler, used to call these the Lords nudgings. Now Moses had a little more than a nudge from the Lord! Yet he resisted that nudge at first. If you are feeling a nudge, talk to Pastor Jessie. Maybe you are unsure of your next step. Again, I encourage you to talk to Pastor Jessie. She is very passionate about helping anyone discern Gods call.

Our second servant is Elijah. He is my personal favorite. In reading the bible seriously for the first time several years ago I discovered Elijah and was absolutely astounded at what was going on in First Kings. But first let's catch up on some biblical history. This will be short and sweet so stay with me. We just talked about Moses who lived more

than 3500 years ago. Less than 3000 years ago Elijah shows up in the text in 1Kings. Between Moses and Elijah we have the Judges. Stories of Gideon, Deborah, Samson and others make for some very interesting reading. King Saul, and King David come next and Davids son Solomon builds a lavish temple and the United Kingdom of Israel is at its height power. During and after Solomons reign, the Israelites lost track of God. Quite a few bad kings led the Israelites to not only split the United Kingdom in 2 but also led them to worshipping God improperly. Gods chosen people started worshipping other gods. In our Isaiah study we learned over and over that worshipping other Gods makes God very angry!!! The King and Queen of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in Elijahs time are the notorious Ahab and Jezebel.

In 1Kings chapter 17 Elijah appears suddenly. In the first verse he says to Ahab, “As the Lord lives there will be no rain or dew for several years.” Elijah performs several miracles. He provides a starving widow and her son and endless supply of oil and flour during the famine with no rain. The widows son falls ill and dies but Elijah prayed to the Lord asking for the sons life. The Lord answers Elijahs prayer and restores the life of the widows son. That gives you a little background that we are talking about someone that serves God with serious authority and power.

Now for my all-time favorite event in the Old Testament. Elijah on top of Mount Carmel. We drove past Mt Carmel on our trip to Israel. Next time we will have to go up on top! Now Ahab and especially Jezebel were rounding up all the prophets in Israel and Elijah who had halted the rain at Gods word was on the run. Elijah meets Ahab and Ahab asks, “Is that you troubler of Israel?” Elijah responds by calling out Ahab as the trouble maker. Elijah is granted an assembly of all the people of Israel and Ahab and Jezebels prophets of Baal on top of Mt. Carmel. Elijah asks the people to pick one; either Baal or the Lord God. No one responds. So Elijah says the prophets of Baal and I will make a separate sacrifice to our God. Whose God answers by fire will be the true God! So Elijah is calling for a miracle by fire which the people agree to because, after all, the god Baal they have been worshipping is supposed to control the weather including fire.

So the prophets of Baal prepare their alter and start calling on their god from morning til noon. Nothing happens, except Elijah begins taunting them by exclaiming, “Shout louder!! Maybe he is deep in thought or busy or traveling. Maybe he is asleep and needs to be awakened!” This works these prophets to a frenzy and still no fire from above. By evening still no Baal god bringing down fire. Elijah then prepares his alter and his sacrifice and makes a strange request. “Bring me 4 large jars of water.” He pours it over his sacrifice wetting down the wood and surrounding area. He asks this to be done twice more. So he has a muddy wet mess around his alter. This brings us to our scripture Susan read this morning from 1Kings18:36-39.

At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.

Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also lifted up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord, He is God! The Lord He is God!”

Elijah then commands that the prophets of Baal be killed and tells Ahab that the rain is on the way. After years of drought at Elijah's command the Lord brings rain. You would think that Ahab and Jezebel would repent and everyone would worship the Lord again immediately. Instead a messenger comes from Jezebel tells Elijah that she will have him killed.

You would think that Elijah would be fearless and trust the Lord in these circumstances, but he runs for his life in fear. Exhausted after his flight he prays to God to take his life. Of course God does not grant this prayer and God restores Elijah who goes on to find his successor Elisha.

Have you ever had one of those mountain top experiences where your faith was at its strongest and then struggle to keep that faith? Elijah and Moses show us how even the greatest men in history can doubt, lose faith, and need help in their life and faith journey. Moses goes on to pass the leadership torch to Joshua and Elijah passes the proverbial flame to Elisha. Is there someone in your life that you can pass your faith on to? Who is God calling you to connect with?

Our last servant is Peter. Remember at the Last Supper that Peter boldly announces that he is ready to go to prison or die with Christ. Jesus predicts otherwise as we heard this morning in our Gospel Lesson from Luke 22:54-62, telling of Peter's denial of Christ. 3 years of seeing the miracles; 3 years building a relationship with Jesus; 3 years of knowing and believing that Jesus is God! Peter's fear overcomes him and he denies the Son of God! Imagine how he felt. Imagine the shame and anguish. The scripture says that Peter wept bitterly after he denies knowing Jesus and realizes that Jesus' prediction has come true.

Now we know that Peter had a dramatic comeback after Pentecost. Aided by the Holy Spirit, Peter was unstoppable in his passion for telling the Good News; the story of Jesus. I doubt that we would be here today in this place without Peter.

Maybe you can identify with some of the characteristics from these servants of the Lord, both good bad. Maybe these servants can give you hope that we can serve God first by acknowledging our flaws and failings, accepting the grace of God, and changing our priorities to serve God first. What is God calling you to do? Is there any urgency in figuring this out?

We only have a finite time on this earth. We can find out Gods calling in our lives through prayer, through study, through service, through relationships, through the community of the Church. One day we will meet the Lord face to face.

I hope and pray that I can tell the Lord the verse from 2Timothy4:7. I hope and pray that I can say that “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” Pastor Hyo Lee said those words to my Dad on his last day on earth in reference to Dads service to the Lord. I expect our sister Ce Pike could have echoed those words.

My greatest hope and prayer for you and for me is that we can find what God is calling us to do and that we can say, “Lord I fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” And Jesus responds to us face to face, “Well done good and faithful servant.”

Let's Pray