

## **Come, Follow Me to Jesus: Get Rid of Your Excuses!**

A sermon based on Exodus 3:1-15

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

There's a show on TV Becky and I used to be pretty big fans of, maybe you were too, the Biggest Loser. The premise is bringing together a dozen or so people who are overweight, and over the next months they are in competition to see who can lose the most weight. Now, one of the seasons was themed, "Getting Rid of the Excuses," excuses why I can't get rid of the weight, why I can't work out, and others.

But for us, excuses don't only need to be limited to working out. We have excuses for everything. I want to get out of that work function, "Oh, bummer! My daughter's school is having their science fair on that same day. Can't go." A girl doesn't want to go out with a guy, so she makes up an excuse, "Uh, I have to go home and wash my hair!" I've heard that one before! Even, unfortunately, sometimes with church-related events and activities, we make excuses not to go. There could be an excuse for everything.

Last week, we saw the urgency in sharing Jesus with our friends. We want everyone to come and follow Jesus to the cross and beyond, to eternal life. But often there are obstacles in the way...me, you, and our excuses not to share Jesus. Well, today, let's get rid of those excuses!

Now, if we're going to talk about excuses, I'm guessing Moses isn't the first person who might pop into your head. He isn't exactly known for his excuses. Usually we see in Moses a man who faithfully served as an extension of the Lord's right arm for his entire ministry, except for a small blemish here and there. You might think of him being found floating in a basket in the Nile River, the parting of the Red Sea, the 10 plagues, his strong leadership during the 40-year journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land, even his having the 10 Commandments handed to him by God. But his excuses? Maybe we don't know those as well.

But hopefully you heard them earlier this morning when I read through our verses. Now, Moses and the burning bush, that's familiar. He was tending his father-in-law's sheep and noticed something strange on Mt. Horeb. After climbing up, he was strangely surprised to see it was a bush on fire, which maybe in the dry season wouldn't have been all that uncommon. But this one didn't burn. That's right, it was on fire, but it wasn't burning down.

He wanted to get closer to see this scientific wonder when God stopped him in his tracks. He explained to Moses who he was, the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the same God of Israel, yeah, that Israel being oppressed back in Egypt, under the tight fist of Pharaoh, Egypt, the same place only years earlier Moses had escaped as a fugitive.

God had important news for Moses. He had heard his children crying out from under their bonds, and he was going to do something about it. He was going to send Moses to go and set the Israelites free.

A great honor, indeed, to be handpicked by God to be his people's deliverer, but I'm not so sure Moses saw it like that. Because that's where the excuses started.

First? "Who am I, that I should go?" Maybe he didn't think he was the right guy for the job. Understandable. It wasn't like Pharaoh and the rest of Egypt were going to welcome Moses home with

open arms. But see God's answer. "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt..." Number one, God would be with him, great assurance. But just as good, he was promising Moses success.

Should've been good enough for Moses, but it wasn't. Excuse number two: "Suppose I go to the Israelites and tell them you sent me but they don't believe me. Then what?" God's answer? "Tell them I AM (the eternal God), has sent you. The LORD (the God of free and faithful grace) has sent you."

Now, those are the only two excuses we see in our text today, but they didn't end there. If you read on, you see Moses coming up with excuse after excuse. "What if they don't believe me or listen to me?" "I'm not the most eloquent speaker. I'm a slow talker. Surely I can't be the deliverer of your people." "Just send someone else to do it!"

And, goodness, time after time, God answered every excuse, patiently answered every excuse. That should have allayed his fears, but for Moses it didn't...until the very last excuse, when God was done with his excuses and became angry, and then pretty much told him, "Enough of the excuses! You're going!"

Now, we can't say for sure what was Moses' intent with his excuses really was. We can't see into his heart. But we can see into ours, and I know I've made excuses before when God has called me to go and be his witness and to tell others the gospel. Have you as well?

The list of excuses we've made not to go out and share our faith in Jesus can go on and on and on, but let's look at some of them right now. Excuse one: "I'm not sure what to say." I feel like I'm not well-versed enough in God's Word to comfortably speak about it with others. Have you said that before?

Excuse two: "I'm afraid I'll say something wrong." What if I quote that passage the wrong way? What happens if they ask me a question about God's Word and I don't know the answer? I'll feel too embarrassed. I don't want to fail. Have you said that before?

Excuse three: "I feel that this subject is too personal to talk about." People today say that talking religion and politics is taboo, so I don't want to offend other people or make them feel like I'm "pushing" Jesus or "religion" on them. I don't want my friends to hate me. Have you ever said that before?

Excuse four: "I'm not sure it will do any good." The type of life they lead, doesn't exactly match up with the way a child of Christ lives. I'm sure my message would fall upon deaf ears. Have you ever said that before?

Excuse five: "I'm not sure that's really even my job. Isn't that what we pay Pastor the big bucks to do?" And we would hope and pray that every pastor is making outreach a vital part of his ministry, but did God only say, "Therefore, pastors, go and make disciples of all nations..."? Have you ever said that before?

Alright, I'm guessing that's a good enough sample size. If you want my sermon to last an hour, I could keep going. I didn't think so! But, are any of those excuses you've used before? Are there others you would add to it? "I don't have time," "I don't have people to evangelize to," "I'm too lazy" are a few others that come to my mind, excuses I've used before.

The question is not only, "What excuses have you made?" It's also, "Is any excuse not to go valid?" Jesus told his disciples the parable of the talents, where the master was going away on business, so he put three of his servants in charge of his talents, his money. He told them to invest his money, make him some more, and that's exactly what two of the servants did. The third was lazy and just buried his talent; didn't lose any money, but didn't try making any either.

You remember that parable? What happened when the master returned? Did the master let him off the hook because his intentions were good? They weren't good, they were self-serving and self-seeking. They were selfish. He held his servant accountable for his actions. He took the talent away, and threw him outside into the darkness, where Jesus said, "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

What's at the heart of every excuse you or I can give? Isn't it selfish, self-serving, self-seeking? God, I don't care if you want this...I don't. I don't care enough about that person to use my talent. I don't care enough about that person to share Jesus with them.

Thank God Jesus wasn't the same way. He could've said, "Why would I want to go to earth and become a man? I have cushy life up here. Why would I want to leave that?" Thank God he didn't. He could have said, "Why would I want to live and die for these people? They had their chance to follow you and they blew it. Let them deal with the consequences." Thank God he didn't! He could have said, "Die on the cross for their sins? I'm perfect. I'm the King of the universe. I won't subject myself to be tormented and killed by sinful humans." Thank God he didn't!

But just as God patiently and lovingly answer every one of Moses' excuses and concerns, he has patient answers for you and me as well. His greatest answer, of course, was Jesus.

You know that message so well. Every sin we've ever committed, every mistake we've ever made, every excuse we've ever spoken, even for not going, Jesus has forgiven it because of his life, his death, and his resurrection. And his only excuse for going, for doing all that? "I love you. I want you to be with me in heaven. I love you!"

That's really the same reason Jesus asks you and me to go and tell others the good news that he lived, and died, and rose to save them from their sins as well. "I love you. I love all people. I want every soul to be with me in heaven. I love all people. I love you."

He doesn't twist our arms into going. He doesn't even lose his patience with us and become angry, like he did with Moses. Instead, he gives us loving motivation to go, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again...We are therefore Christ's ambassadors."

Now, being his ambassador, being his witness, being an evangelist for Jesus, it's not always easy. Making excuses not to go seems like the easy way to go. But Jesus wants us to get rid of the excuses holding us back and think instead of the excuse why we go, "I love you. I want you to be with me in heaven. I love you!"

And when we do have the excuses not to go, you know the awesome thing God does? He answers them. You only need to look in to his word. I'm not sure what to say? Acts 4:20 – "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." Your message is right here!

I'm afraid I'll say something wrong? Matthew 10:19-20 – "Do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say...the Spirit of your Father [will be] speaking through you."

And maybe his best answer? Isaiah 55:11 – "My Word will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." We don't have to focus on the results. That's a good thing, because otherwise there might be the temptation to focus too much on visible goals...they have to join our church...they have to become Christians, or else I've been a big failure. No, the results are God's, and success to him is when we go.

So how about those excuses? Don't you want to just be rid of them? Friends, souls are out there, waiting, yearning for you to tell them the news of Jesus' incredible love. And with joy and eagerness, we get to be out there, inviting them to come and follow you to Jesus, and know this. God is there, working hand in hand with you, and with him working, there will be results. Your efforts will succeed! Amen.