

Excuses
February 2, 2014

I thought it would be a good way to start this sermon to read you some funny excuses. So I went online to look. I found lots of excuses, most of which claimed to be genuine excuses that someone had used. There are lots of lists with lots of excuses. There are excuses for not doing chores, excuses for not doing homework, excuses for being late, excuses for not showing up for work. Nothing was really funny. They mostly sounded lame and sad. Some of them made the people using them sound stupid, like these two.

"I wasn't texting, officer, I was checking my Facebook page."

"Was I speeding? I'm sorry, officer. Without my glasses, I can hardly see the speedometer."

These people don't seem to be with it. Many of the excuses I read made the people using them sound stupid. There isn't a nice way to say that.

Another impression I got was that many of the excuses assumed that the one hearing the excuse was stupid, like these two excuses to a parent for not doing homework.

"The teacher said I was doing such a good job in school that I didn't have to do any homework this week. I'm already way ahead of everyone else."

"I've been doing all of my homework but the teacher keeps losing it and saying that I didn't turn it in. Why should I bother?"

So, I don't have a list of funny excuses for you this morning. On-the-other-hand, I did find some good, thought-provoking quotes about making excuses.

No one ever excused his way to success. ~Dave Del Dotto

If you don't want to do something, one excuse is as good as another.
~Yiddish Proverb

Never ruin an apology with an excuse. ~Kimberly Johnson

He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else.
~Benjamin Franklin

We are all manufacturers - some make good, others make trouble, and still others make excuses. ~Author Unknown

This morning we're going to look at the chief excuse maker in the Bible. The setting is the Sinai wilderness where a man named Moses is tending a flock of sheep. We pick up the story in the book of Exodus, chapter three.

Exodus 3:1-3 (NIV) Now Moses... led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of Yahweh (God) appeared to him in flames of fire from

within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up."

When Moses approaches the bush, God speaks to Moses from out of the bush. God tells Moses that He, God, is aware of the suffering of the Israelites who have been enslaved in Egypt. He hears their prayers and cries for help. And now, God has a job for Moses to do.

Exodus 3:10 (NIV) "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

And Moses says, "Who me?" "Me?" "You talking' to me?"

Exodus 3:11 (NIV) But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

Moses objects. This is his first excuse. "Who am I" means, "I'm a nobody." And he had a good point. Though he had a good education when he was younger, he is now just a shepherd. He has lived as a shepherd for most of 40 years and he isn't anyone of consequence among the people with whom he now lives. He is a Hebrew and they are Midianites. In addition he is 80 years old. Admittedly he is doing pretty good for an 80 year old guy. The Bible elsewhere says he was as strong at 80 as he was at 40. But even though his health was good, in his heart he knows he is a murderer. That's why he ran away from Egypt 40 years before, so he wouldn't be executed for murder. So we can understand if he tries to excuse himself from the job God wants him to do, especially since that job is in Egypt.

"Me, go back to Egypt? Me, confront Pharaoh? You got to be kidding!" But Moses was just the front man. God was the power.

Exodus 3:12 (NIV) And God said, "I will be with you."

God wasn't asking him to go in his own name and power, but in God's name and power. God was the power, though Moses did not yet know this power. The non-burning bush, I don't know why people call it the burning bush. It wasn't burning! The non-burning bush was a nice trick, but that wouldn't protect Moses from Pharaoh. Moses had not yet realized the power of God.

The same might be said about you. As you face different situations in your life, you may be thinking, "I have enough trouble trying to pay the bills and lead a normal life. How could You expect me to do more than I'm doing?" "You got to be kidding me, God."

God isn't kidding. God says He is with us. That ought to be enough. That ought to be enough. We shouldn't be thinking we need anything more than the presence and power of God. God isn't calling you to go out and do something in your name and your power and your skills and your knowledge. He is calling you to go out with Him and let Him use His resources in the situations of your life. God saying, "I will be with you," ought to be enough. That's what Jesus says to His followers before he went back to heaven. He said, "I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." We're still in that age. Jesus is with you. That ought to be enough. It IS enough.

Don't believe that? Aren't you listening to Him? Aren't you following Him? Or are you giving Him excuses like Moses did?

Moses is full of excuses. His first one is that he is a nobody. Of all the people to go to Pharaoh on behalf of the Israelites, Moses says he isn't the one.

Then Moses asks a question. It is sort of an excuse. He says, "Why should they listen to me?"

Exodus 3:13-15 (NIV) Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

Then Moses tries another excuse. "They aren't going to believe me." I might as well not go cause they aren't going to believe me.

Exodus 4:1 (NIV) Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'Yahweh did not appear to you'?"

So then God gives Moses a further demonstration of His, God's, power. He changes Moses' walking stick into a snake and then back to a stick. Then he changes Moses' arm from healthy, to diseased, and back again. God says, "Show them these signs." I'll let you do these things when you get there.

Moses isn't done yet.

Exodus 4:10 (NIV) Moses said to Yahweh, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."

He says, God, you don't want me as your spokesperson. I don't talk well or present myself well. I am not a quick thinker. He may have even stuttered some.

God comes back with more about His power.

Exodus 4:11-12 (NIV) Yahweh said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, Yahweh? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."

Moses tries once more to find an excuse. This is the real one.

Exodus 4:13 (NIV) But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

Translated that means, "God, I just don't want to go. I don't want to do it. Get someone else. I got better things to do."

Is that what you've been saying to God lately? He keeps pulling you towards something, or pushing you away from something else. And you keep resisting? You keep coming up with excuses for not doing what He wants you to do.

Part of the problem with the Bible, as with any written word, is that we can't hear the inflections in the words. We can't hear attitude. But sometimes the words make it plain.

Exodus 4:14-17 (NIV) Then Yahweh's anger burned against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you.

You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him."

Yahweh's anger burned against Moses. I think God raised His voice that last time. What do you think? God definitely expressed some attitude.

Read your Bible. The Bible clearly says that God is slow to get angry. He is slow to get angry. But He does get angry. Just a quick peek in the Bible showed me four things that really God going. There may be more, but I quickly saw with a good search engine, four things. One is griping and complaining. Two is idolatry by God's people. Three is lack of compassion for the poor. And a fourth thing that invites the anger of God is making excuses instead of obedience.

Here is today's point. **Repeated resistance provokes the righteous anger of God.**

Listen, of all the persons in the universe that you do NOT want angry at you, the most significant one is God. The Bible says God is love, and that characteristic is true of Him more than anything else. But make no mistake. You can't walk all over God. You can't take advantage of God. God gets angry. It is always justifiable anger, righteous anger. But it is still anger.

When you parents tell your children several times to pick up their toys or do their chores, and they ignore you, you get angry, and rightly so. The same is true of God. He gets rightly angry at us when we ignore what He is telling us to do.

I don't want God angry at me. And the people who ought to know better are some of the worst offenders. I'm speaking of Christians.

Does God need to use some attitude on you? Have you been giving God excuses?

I'm not old enough.
I don't know enough.
I don't know how to pray.
I don't understand enough of the Bible.
Nobody likes me.
I don't like working under other people.
I don't speak well.
I can't do it good enough.
I don't want to do this. Send someone else.

What excuse have you been giving to God? Really? You've got to be kidding me. There is no GOOD excuse for refusing to obey God. There is no acceptable excuse for refusing to obey God. God wouldn't take no from Moses. He won't take no from you. Your life, your spirit, will be unsettled as long as you are holding God at arm's length. You will not be at peace until you are living out what God is asking you to do.

Submit yourself to God, in prayer, and then obedience. There is no other choice for a follower of Jesus Christ. There is no other LIFE for a follower of Jesus Christ. Submit yourself to Him.

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You may not yet be a Christian. Maybe you believe, but have been giving God excuse after excuse for not heeding His call to follow. You think life is going to be better apart from serving Jesus. You could not be more wrong. And the afterlife will be horrible without Jesus.

There are depths of love and joy you will never experience apart from serving Jesus. Stop making excuses to Him. Submit to Him as Lord today.