

Ready or Not

LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church

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Exodus 3:11-14

Good evening. My name is Rachel Thorne and I am the Minister of Youth here at LaGrave. It is an honor to be able to share a message tonight that I hope will resonate deeply with our seniors who are sitting at the end of one chapter and getting ready for the start of a new chapter. I also hope it resonates with you, congregation, as maybe some of you are also sitting at the end of one chapter and preparing for a new one or you have been in that position before and can relate to what our seniors are experiencing now.

I want to start by imagining with you a game of hide and seek. Many of you have probably played hide and seek before, maybe at a friend's house, at a playground, or maybe even here at church. There is one seeker who closes their eyes and counts to a predetermined number like 10 or 20. While they are counting, the rest of the people playing the game run and try to find a hiding spot. Common hiding spots include behind doors, inside closets, under blankets, or behind furniture. When the seeker is done counting, they open their eyes and shout as loud as they can, "READY OR NOT...HERE I COME". It is an announcement that the seeker is on their way. And the hiders, then, have to ask themselves "Am I ready or not?"

For some of the hiders, they may answer that question with "I sure am! I'm ready!" I'm tucked in a corner, behind some furniture, with a blanket over my head and no one is going to find me here. I'm safe, secure, comfortable, and I'm ready. For other hiders, their answer is "I'm not ready." They are standing in the middle of the room, fully exposed, and they know they are going to get found first. They are starting to feel nervous, anxious, worried that they won't find their spot. They are not ready.

This question, "Am I ready or not?" is a natural question to ask when we are at the start of a new chapter in our lives. Am I ready to move to that new college or university? Am I ready to start that new job? Am I ready to go out into the world and move out of my parents' house? Whatever the next chapter is, that question, "Am I ready or not?" is a natural one to be asking.

In our passage today, we encounter Moses at a moment where one chapter of his life is ending and another one is beginning. Moses woke up that morning as another shepherd in the land of Midian. He grabbed his sheep and brought them out to look for places to graze. And as he was looking for food for the sheep, he came across a bush that was burning, yet not burning. I picture it like a campfire where the logs are burning but they are not changing. They are not burning down like they should. This bush is enveloped in flame and is not burning up or changing.

So, like any curious person, Moses goes up to that bush and hears the voice of God telling him that he has been chosen to be the leader of the Israelites and he will go and lead them out of Egypt. Moses is now at a moment of change in his life. He is not being called to just shepherd sheep, he is now being called to shepherd the people of Israel.

And so it is here that I want to spend some time today. When Moses is confronted with this life change he has to ask himself "Am I ready or not?" He responds by saying "not ready" and actually makes 5 excuses trying to convince God that he is "not ready." But it's not Moses' excuses that I want us to focus on. Instead, I want to focus on how God responds to Moses. God provides 3 things to Moses at this moment of change and God also provides these 3 things to us when we are at moments of change.

The first thing that God provides is the assurance of his presence. In verse 11, we read Moses' first excuse: "But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'" And rather than ridiculing Moses, God responds with a simple sentence: "I will be with you" I will be with you, says God. God doesn't send Moses into this new chapter of life alone. Instead, God goes with him, leading him, guiding him, and sustaining him. And the same is true for our seniors, the same is true for all of us. When we enter new stages of life, God goes with us, leading us, guiding us, and sustaining us in the new things he has called us to.

The second thing God gives Moses is a blessing which empowers Moses to be a blessing to others. Moses' second excuse comes in verse 13: "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?" Moses does not

believe the Israelites will trust him. Which, honestly, is pretty fair. Moses has not seen the Israelites for many years. Earlier in Exodus, Moses actually flees from Egypt to Midian, where he is now, so he has not been around or seen the people of Israel for a while. He is going to be a stranger trying to come back into the fold. It would be like if you and your family were at your Christmas party that is always at your grandma's house and your estranged cousin shows up who you have not seen in 30 years and says "Let's take this Christmas party to my house." None of you will uproot your traditions for this person you have not seen. You are going to stay right where you are. And Moses was afraid the Israelites would say the same to him and not follow him.

Instead of leaving Moses to fend for himself, God blesses Moses with his name. God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM... Thus you shall say to the Israelites, I AM has sent me to you." God's name is the blessing Moses receives and we know that Moses takes that name and goes and leads the Israelites out of Egypt. He becomes a blessing to them because of the blessing he received from God.

And once again, God does the same for us. He blesses us with different gifts, talents, and abilities. These have been part of our life so far and will continue with us into the next chapter of our lives. And you will be able to use these gifts to be a blessing to the people in your life that you meet in your next chapter.

As the conversation continues Moses makes another excuse which God responds to, but the last one I want to focus on is his 4th excuse in Exodus 4:10. It is here that we find God's last piece of provision for Moses and that is that God provides support for Moses.

Moses' last excuse goes something like this: "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." and later he says "O my Lord, please send someone else." Moses is now trying to show he is not ready and not qualified. Once again, God responds. He says: "What of your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently, even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad."

This gift of a companion, of support, is not something that simply makes Moses feel better. Instead, it is a gift that feeds his soul. In one of our small groups in CREW this past year, we talked about loneliness and the people in our lives who make us feel less alone. We talked about how in *Blue Like Jazz* Donald Miller writes about his friend Tony. Miller writes: "Tony the Beat Poet says the words alone, lonely, and loneliness are three of the most powerful words in the English language. I agree with Tony. Those words say that we are human; they are like the words hunger and thirst. But they are not words about the body, they are words about the soul."

By providing Moses with support through his brother Aaron, God is not just providing Moses with a person to go with him, he is providing someone who can help sustain his soul and help him on his journey to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Having people in our lives gives us joy and courage to do hard things. I'm sure many of our seniors can name people in their life who have been soul-fillers; people like family, friends, teachers, coaches, music directors, and many more. And some of those people may go with you into the next chapter, and some might not, but God will provide others in the new chapter. That can come in the form of new roommates, new co-workers, new friends, and new professors. God does not leave us to journey alone. He provides people who can fill our souls and give us courage for the next chapter.

So, Moses was clearly not ready and the question then becomes: so what do we do with this good news that Moses receives? What do we do knowing that God is with us, he blesses us to be a blessing to others, and he provides us with support. What do we do with this good news? The answer is found in the actions of Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane in Matthew 26.

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus goes to the garden and is at a moment of change in his life. He is going from being someone who was traveling, teaching, and doing miracles to now being on the road to the point of death on the cross. And at this moment of change, Jesus moved towards the things he knew were true; the good news we just learned from Moses' story. He moved into God's presence through prayer. He spoke honestly with God and told him how he felt about this new chapter of his life that was coming. He then moved closer to his disciples. He brought them along for support and he actually got mad at them because they fell asleep. He needed them to be there for him, which they were, they just fell asleep first. Jesus knew God had provided the disciples for that moment. And finally, Jesus remembered all the ways God had blessed him so far and this gave him courage to walk to the cross and become the greatest blessing any of us have ever known; the one who died on a cross to save us from our sins.

And so what do we do with the good news from the story of Moses? We follow the example of Jesus. We move toward God when we encounter change in our lives. We turn toward the people that have been placed

there to support us. And we remember the many blessings God has poured out on us in the past, how much he will bless us in the future, and we use those blessings to be a blessing to others.

So we come back to our game of hide and seek. The seeker has just yelled out “Ready or not...here I come.” The hiders are asking themselves, “Am I ready or not?” The graduation date is set; your next chapter is coming. So whether you are ready or not, go with these truths: that God has been and will continue to be with you. God has blessed you and will continue to bless you so that you can be a blessing to others. And that God has provided support for you and will continue to provide support for you as you go. So, ready or not, here you come.

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