We are going to read a few verses in a moment from the book of Exodus and Chapter 4. While you are turning there may I take a moment to thank you, for those of you who prayed for me these last days that I have been in Japan. We had two excellent conferences – one in Okinawa, which is an island, about a three-hour flight south of Tokyo, closer to Taiwan than it is to Mainland China. But it has for the last 400 years been Japanese territory – a big battle there – the Battle of Okinawa – during World War II made it famous as being a military base since for American military in the Pacific. But some wonderful folks there; very receptive; good numbers attending.

And then I was in Kyushu, which is a southern province on mainland on one of the main islands of Japan up in the mountains where we, at a resort, had a convention that ran through this week beginning Monday night through until Thursday night. And people came in to stay for that, and again, receptive and hungry and a lot of pastors there, which was very encouraging.

And everything in Japan, Christian work wise, is slow and hard and small. The average church is around 30 to 40 people. There are some larger churches in some areas. I first went to Japan 25 years ago and I spoke there at various places but it is interesting to see that now there are some larger churches where there are inroads being made. In Tokyo in particular now there is a large church, which there wasn’t years ago.

And it’s quite a contrast with South Korea, which is just an hour’s flight away. And in Kyushu this last week I shared ministry with a Korean pastor who had gone to start a church 33 years ago in Pusan, which is predominantly Buddhist area of South Korea.

And he and two families, or his family plus two families started this church and in 33 years they have seen God work in amazing ways. They now have 20,000 people and 120 full-time pastors on their staff.

Now if you were in Japan and you started a church 33 years ago with two families, you would be thrilled if today you had 20 families, let alone 20,000, because the work there is so much harder. And there are all kinds of factors that play into that which are intriguing in themselves. I asked that question to many people – why – and I have asked this on previous trips to Japan. And there are some possible explanations for this, though none of them are in themselves the full explanation.

But we need you to pray for real spiritual breakthrough in that land. There is a darkness that holds people in a certain bondage.
Technologically it is a very advanced country. Probably Japan is 20 years ahead of North America in its technology and the way it has advanced, as is quite a bit of Asia where it is the pacesetter now for technology certainly and ease and comfort of life.

But spiritually certainly Japan is a dark, dark place for which, if God lays on your heart, do pray. But thank you for praying for me and the privilege I had of opening the Word of God and teaching hungry people, as they were, who were attending these meetings.

Tonight at 6 o’clock I have on a number of Sunday evenings been looking at the whole nature of spiritual gifts. And tonight I want to talk about the gift of tongues, what the New Testament says about that, what its place is. And if that is of interest to you, I trust you will join us at 6 o’clock for that.

But let me now read to you from Exodus Chapter 4. I am going to read from Verse 10 down to Verse 17.

And if you have been with us in recent weeks, you will know that we are looking at this first part of the book of Exodus when God called Moses and sent him back into Egypt to bring the people of Israel who had gone as honoured guests some 400 years before but now have been reduced to servitude, and more than that, to slavery and bondage.

And they have grown to two million. They have tried to keep the population down. They have tried to kill baby boys. Moses escaped that genocide. And when he was 80 years of age God met with him at the burning bush. And the conversation at the burning bush covers Chapters 3 and 4.

And I am coming in during this conversation in Verse 10 where God and Moses are talking back and forth, and Moses raising problems and God is giving answers. And Moses sees another problem; God gives another answer. Moses sees another dilemma and God comes in again with an answer. And we’re coming in part of that in Verse 10 where Moses said to the Lord,

“‘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.’

“The LORD 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, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.’

“But Moses said, ‘O Lord, please send someone else to do it.’

Exodus: Here Am I, Send Someone Else – Part 5 – Price 2009
“Then the LORD’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 I 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. But take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it.’”

Then the conversation ends. Next verse says, “Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law…” and began to make the arrangements to go back into Egypt as God had instructed him to.

You know most of us are a lot less confident than we probably look. Behind our outward appearances usually lie inner insecurities, self-doubt, fears. While at the same time most of us look at others and we assume them to be confident and self-assured in a way that we ourselves are not.

And many of us are desperate to deal with that kind of issue. If you are not sure about that, go into any good bookstore and see how many shelves are devoted to self-help books, to confidence building tricks that you can learn, see how many seminars come along that will address how you can be the confident you. And you realize when you see the variety of things available, how insecure most of us feel.

Let me read you an advertisement that I saw only in the last two days. And I will read it to you word for word. It says, “Discover how you can boost your confidence through the roof, eliminate your shyness, burst past old limitations and instantly program your mind for success.” And here’s the best bit: “All of this in under 15 minutes.”

Well that combines the age-old fears of our lack of confidence and our shyness and our limitations with 21st Century superficial, instant, 15-minute solutions. And it is superficial of course.

But perhaps Moses should have taken a course like that. You know I love the fact that Scripture tells the truth about its heroes. When you look into this Scripture if you ever see somebody who appears on a pedestal, you can be pretty sure at some stage he is going to fall off it anyway.

And again and again and again, when you look into the stories of the heroes of Scripture, you find yourselves looking into a mirror and you find that these people were very much like I am.

When God called Moses at the burning bush to lead Israel out of Egypt he had lots of reasons why he could not do it. And many of us here are very slow, if almost completely reticent to get involved in serving God because we have our reasons, we have our excuses and more than that, we believe those reasons and we believe those excuses and so we are glad other people are on the job, “but I never could be.”
You know there is something refreshingly familiar with Moses’ excuses. We are going
to look at some of them this morning. But we are not just concerned with a bit of Old
Testament history; we are looking into the pages of Scripture to find out God’s agenda
for us as His people.

What is a biblical church? What is it supposed to do? How is it supposed to do it? The
New Testament church is primarily two-dimensional, if I may for simplification speak of
it in that way. It has an upward dimension; it has an outward dimension.

Now it is necessary to be inward looking from time to time but usually as a means of
course correction so that our upward and our outward perspectives are wholesome and
healthy.

The upward look is of course to Christ our Head. It is that we may love Him with all our
hearts and souls and strength, that we may depend on Him knowing His sufficiency for
us, that we may, obedient to Him, submitting to His lordship in our lives.

There is an upward look that is the source of everything else, but then there’s the outward
look. And the outward look is the look of how it is that we are workers in the words of
Paul, “workers together with Him in reaching our world.”

The church of Jesus Christ is a missional church. That is, its reason for existence is the
mission of God, the purposes of God. We have no independent purpose other than the
purposes of God. And to be missional is to be more than approving mission or
applauding mission or giving money to mission – it’s even more than praying for
mission. It’s to be involved together with God in His mission, locally and globally.

But we need to be very honest about this. All of this looks much easier when other
people are doing it. And when it comes to me, when it comes to us, most of us are
actually scared – of course we are.

And I want to look at Moses’ response to God at the burning bush because the interesting
thing is the first words that Moses spoke to God at the bush in Exodus Chapter 3 were
when God called his name, he said, “Here I am.” And then there’s lots in between and
then the last words that Moses says to God are in Chapter 4 Verse 13 when he says,
“Please send someone else.”

So I am putting those two statements together as the title of my message this morning.
“Here I Am, Please Send Someone Else.” And it probably resonates.

And I want to look at the five excuses that Moses gave to God as to why He should send
someone else, and God’s answers to those five excuses. And they are very common
excuses, and very understandable excuses.
The first one is in Chapter 3 Verse 10 when Moses says, “I am inadequate.” That’s the essence of that because when the Lord said, “I am sending you”, Moses said, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

Now we can speculate about the legitimate reasons why Moses thought this at this stage when God spoke to him.

But there had been a time when Moses had actually believed in his own significance. He had believed in his own influence and he had believed in his own ability.

We know that because in Acts Chapter 7 when Stephen gave that address to the Sanhedrin Council and he surveyed the whole Old Testament story (if you want the Old Testament in a nutshell, read Stephen’s sermon in Acts Chapter 7).

And one of the things he says there in Acts 7: 42 is that Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

And by the way, Egypt was the most civilized, advanced country in the world and Moses, by virtue of the fact that he had been adopted into the royal family, humanly through a fluke when he had been hidden to avoid being killed as a baby in a basket in the River Nile and Pharaoh’s daughter had found it, taken him home, adopted him. And therefore he had been educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, one of the best-educated people there would have been. His royal privileges would have given him access to the best teachers. Not only that, says Stephen, he was powerful in speech, an orator, a persuader of men and powerful in action. And then Verse 25 says that Moses thought (this was when he was forty years of age),

“Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not.”

In other words, at the age of forty, Moses came to the conclusion that nobody else actually shared, and the conclusion was, “I am the kitty. I am the guy. I am the man. Why don’t they realize that with all my education in the wisdom of Egypt, in all my contact with Egyptian hierarchy, with the fact that I am powerful in speech and powerful in action, I am one of the few men that can make things happen? Why don’t they realize that I have been planted by God in the right place at the right time to be the means of rescuing them?”

But it says, “They did not.” In other words, the people were totally unimpressed.

The only person who believed in Moses at that stage seemed to be Moses himself. And in his own strength, based on his own competence and his own self-belief, Moses had tried to do something about the predicament of Israel.

And he had killed an Egyptian. Whether his strategy was to get them all one by one, I don’t know, but he got one certainly, buried him in the sand - a little too quickly because
somebody found the body and Moses was accused of his murder and fled from Egypt into the Midian desert.

And for the next forty years, having found some girls looking after sheep, he got a job with them, worked for their father as a shepherd, married one of the them, and lived in the back side of the desert for these next forty years, every year more and more drained of his self-confidence and drained of his own significance.

And now when he is eighty years of age, God appears to him. “I have heard the cry of the people, I have seen their distress; I have come down to rescue them. I am sending you.”

“Who am I?”

And God’s answer to Moses’ inadequacy was in the next verse. “I will be with you. You may be insignificant Moses, you may be inadequate to the task Moses, but I am not.”

And the Lord’s reaction was not to make Moses adequate or somehow transform him into a man up to the task by his own right. What He did promise him was the adequacy of His own presence in the inadequacy of Moses’ self-sufficiency.

And that of course is an eternal truth. If we never get beyond our own inadequacy to discover His adequacy, we’ll never do anything of lasting value. We can try to muster up courage or try to generate skill on our own. Of course we need skill, of course we need courage, but all of that, devoid of spiritual content (which is the presence and life of God Himself active within us), will come to nothing.

And the secret of effective service is that it is on the basis of divine adequacy expressed through human inadequacy that produces fruit.

So what do you have to be to qualify - adequate or inadequate? The answer is you have to be inadequate.

At the age of forty Moses would classify himself adequate – best education, influence, powerful speech, young man, fit, ideal - why don’t the people recognize it?

Because there had to come a point where Moses would come to the conclusion that he was inadequate. And that’s when you discover divine adequacy is expressed through human inadequacy.

Henrietta Mears who wrote a book “Every Man a Bible Student” says, and whether she originated this I don’t know, because I have seen this in various forms, but she said that Moses’ life can be divided into three forty year periods.
The first forty years Moses thought he was somebody. The next forty years he discovered he was nobody. And the last forty years he discovered what God can do through a self-confessed nobody. And that is the best summary I know of Moses’ life.

And it contains some of the most profound truths of the Christian life. Discovering that in ourselves we can do nothing and we are nothing in ourselves, as the New Testament so repeatedly tells us. But that in Christ, in His indwelling presence, we discover what God does with somebody who in themselves is inadequate.

And I ask you have you discovered – really discovered - not as a doctrine, not as a theory, not as a pointer; have you discovered through your tears and your back up against the wall, and you have no idea where to go, have you discovered your inadequacy? You are on the right track if you have, provided you go beyond that now to discover the adequacy of God in the inadequacy of your own life.

That’s the first thing that Moses didn’t know and his first excuse – “I’m inadequate.” His second excuse was, “Okay, but I’m ignorant.” Because in Chapter 3 Verse 14, 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?”

“I don’t know what to say. I mean if I go and they ask me a question, I am stuck. How do I talk about God’s purpose when I don’t even know Your name and I don’t know how to answer their questions?”

Does that ring a bell by the way with anybody here this morning? Why are you so reticent to talk about Christ? Is it because you don’t know what to say? I think for many of us it is. We certainly haven’t got all the answers, that’s for sure. But do we have to?

I mean Moses was to go and tell the people what he knew, not what he didn’t know. But of course, this question, “What is your name?” is a very important question because asking what is your name is more than asking what is the label we can put on you to identify you? Names meant something.

And God answers with a name that has incredible significance to the conversation. He says there in Verse 14 Chapter 3,

“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.’”

Now we talked about this name a couple weeks ago as well. “But I AM in the present tense, Moses; everything you will ever need in any situation.”
A man called Alec Motyer, who has written a number of Old Testament commentaries, in particular has a commentary on Exodus and he says about this statement, this name I AM THAT I AM, he says it is an open-ended assertion of divine sufficiency.

When I read that I thought about that open-ended; I like that. It doesn’t close down the barriers of God’s sufficiency; it is open-ended because in whatever situation you are in, whatever circumstances arise, “I AM sufficient”, whatever unexpected hump on the road you face, “I AM”. Whatever comes in from the left field and catches you totally by surprise, “I AM sufficient”.

It is open-ended and there always remains an abundance yet to be explored and yet to be experienced in God Himself. That’s why the Christian life is a continuous adventure if you live it this way, because whatever you know of God today, whatever you have experienced up until now, don’t settle down on a plateau and say, “Well that’s it”. We go on growing as we go on seeing and experiencing God.

No situation - He can say to Moses, “In fact no situation Moses will ever catch Me out. No situation will ever find Me inadequate or insufficient. I AM.”

It is of course where we get the name Jehovah – probably more accurately, Yahweh would be the Hebrew pronunciation of that.

And of course this remains true for us today. We live the Christian life under the umbrella of what Paul calls “the unsearchable riches of Christ”. You can search them but you will never reach the borders.

It’s like the universe – you go on exploring it; where’s the end of it? Where’s the wall that says that’s the end of the universe, and if there is a wall, what’s beyond that wall anyway? Have the unsearchable riches of Christ; this is what you and I are to live everyday under the protection of the fact that there are unsearchable riches. You have never had reason to discover some of them yet but now you are in a situation, now the lights have gone out in your life, now you don’t know where you are, now you are confused; there is something new to discover about God in this.

And if we are going to get anywhere in serving God and living the Christian life, we have to believe this. Our sufficiency is in Him, as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:5 – let me read you what he said there:

“Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence is from God.”

The King James says,

“Our sufficiency is of God.”

That is, what we need; where do we get it from? It is of God.
And in 2 Corinthians 9:8, Paul says there that our

“God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

Look at the superlatives in that verse. He will make all grace abound to you, so that in all things, at all times, you will have all that you need, and you will abound – not just get by – in every good work.

All of this is just the fleshing out in some way of what it means for God to be I AM.

So where is the deficiency when there is deficiency? It’s certainly not in God. And therefore the measure to which we align our lives with His and our wills with His and our mind with His and our hearts with His, and we live in submission to Him, we won’t have everything, but we will have what we need at the time that we need it, all that we need.

“All of us have a deficiency. It’s not in God. It’s in us.”

“Moses, you don’t know what to say? I AM. Any questions? Because Moses, that’s enough. And your trust is in Me, not in your speaking ability.

But the third thing Moses said - I am inadequate, I am ignorant – third thing, “I am impotent” because in Chapter 4 Verse 1,

“Moses answered, ‘What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, “The Lord did not appear to you.”’

“What if they doubt me?”

I mean after all this is a huge thing, isn’t it? Moses has been missing for forty years. His reputation probably is still there. It’s probably part of the mythology and the story now that Israel has and the parents tell their kids at night about this baby who was rescued, brought up in the palace and everything was fantastic but he disappeared out into the desert, you know, forty years ago, never seen him since. And suddenly forty years later as a man of eighty, he rolls into their again, walks back into their lives and says, “God appeared to me”, and they are probably thinking he is nuts.

That’s what Moses says, “I mean if I say – they will say, ‘The Lord did not appear to you. Moses, what have you been eating out in that desert?’ They simply won’t believe me.”

And do you know why some of us never get involved in serving God? For that very reason – “no one’s going to believe me anyway. If I talk to my neighbor, he’s not going to believe me.”

And God gives Moses in response to this, three signs which we won’t talk about – they turned the staff into a snake (we did talk about that a couple of weeks ago), put your hand
into the cloak, comes out leprous, put it back in, bring it out again, it’s clean. Leprosy was considered incurable in Egypt. This is a sign of the impossible being done. And then take some water and throw it on the ground and it will turn to blood.

We won’t talk about those signs because we haven’t time to basically, other than to point out that they are signs. In Verse 8 the Lord said,

“If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first miraculous sign, they may believe the second.”

Now a sign is not a magician’s trick. It’s not as though He is saying, “Hey listen, you want to impress them? Go and do this and man, they will be impressed! Just put your hand in there, bring it out – wow, they’ll be impressed; they will applaud you.”

No, no, no, that’s what conjurers do, that’s what illusionists do. I mean Egypt had them; they had their magicians; they turned staffs into snakes. The only problem was that Moses’ snake ate their snakes so they had nothing left at the end of it.

They turned water to blood. I mean they could do some of these things. I mean it’s amazing what some of these illusionists – let’s give them the honor of being illusionists – if they were magicians by demonic powers, well, they could do things too.

I was in Manila many years ago – well, a few years ago- and I was with some missionaries and we saw David Copperfield was going to be in Manila doing a show. David Copperfield, one of the most brilliant illusionists around these days, so we went to his show. It was incredible what he could do! It was all illusions of course but you could be very impressed. This isn’t doing, you know, a magic show; these are signs.

This is going to be a sign that points to God, that points to His ability, that points to His enabling, that points to His victory, that points to His competence to do the impossible in the situation.

“Moses, you are impotent. Okay, you go to work, throw your staff down; what happens? It turns to a snake. Who did that Moses? Did you do that?”

“No.”

“Who did that?”

“Well You did that, God.”

“Okay, put your hand in your cloak.”

“Ooh, man, I’ve got leprosy.”

“Put it back.”
“Ooh, it’s gone again.”

“Did you do that Moses?”

“No, I didn’t do that.”

“Who did that?”

“You did that God.”

“Okay so Moses you are going to go into Egypt now. There are going to be some big barriers, going to be some problems. Who is going to actually work? You or Me?”

“You.”

“Thank you Moses.”

“So I’m impotent. So what?”

“Of course you are.”

But this is now the power of God in the impotence of Moses.

And then the fourth is “I’m incompetent. You know, I don’t have the right gifts.”

Look at Verse 10 of Chapter 4.

“Moses said to the LORD, “O Lord, I have never been eloquent”

(Which actually pardon me, that isn’t true but that’s what he said, because we’re told he was powerful in speech, but that’s what he says.)

“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.”

You know, we can build these kind of pictures of ourselves. I think it’s incredible that Moses should say, “I am slow of speech”, because his excuses come pretty thick and fast in these two chapters. He’s not hanging around saying, “I’ll just think about something to say, God; okay I’ve thought about it – yah, I’ve got something to say.” It’s bang, bang, bang, bang. He can speak fast all right; don’t worry.

But that’s when God tells Moses that “you are to explain what I give you to talk about.” God didn’t tell Moses to go and explain the things he didn’t know about God but to explain what he did know, however limited that may seem to be – “explain what you do know.”
And by the way, when you and I engage in conversation with other people, never, never, never be afraid to say, “I don’t actually know the answer to that.” They probably will respect you an awful lot more than if you bluff an answer that doesn’t actually ring true.

I get a lot of e-mails and I had an e-mail from somebody who asked me about something. I wrote back and said, “I have a simple answer to your question – I don’t know.”

So he e-mailed back and said, “But you’re supposed to know; you’re the pastor.”

I wrote back and said, “I’m sorry I don’t know. Maybe in a year’s time I might know but I don’t know it right now. But I’ll tell you what: you try and find the answer and then send me the answer back when you have found it, because you have as much access as I do to understanding what does the Scripture say. You think about it; it’s a concern that you have; it’s not actually – it doesn’t bug me, this one, so you work it out. But I don’t know the answer myself. I’m not going to spend hours working on it for you. You spend hours working on it. And let me know and then the next time somebody asks me the same question, I’ll tell them what you said.”

But the point is this, you see: we don’t know everything. And we get scared because of what we don’t know rather than taking what we do know. “I will give you what to say,” He said in Verse 11,

“Who gave man his mouth?”

In Verse 12:

“Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”

Moses, notice here; Moses talks about his ability (I am slow of speech; I have never been eloquent), and God ignores his ability and talks about the substance of what he is going to speak. “I’ll give you what to say.”

You see sometimes we get more taken up with someone’s speaking ability than we do with the substance of what they have to say. And I tell you, I would rather listen to somebody who is talking substance who doesn’t maybe have a very good ability to speak well, than someone who can speak well and has little to say. Don’t be deceived by the orator.

And Moses says, “I can’t speak. I am not an orator; I am not eloquent.”

And God says, “Okay, you don’t have to be. I will give you the truth that you speak.”

And however forcefully you may feel you speak it, it’s the truth, not the speaker that sets people free.”
God’s answers are getting pretty predictable aren’t they? Everything Moses raises about his own needs God answers by talking about His own sufficiency in that area. “I will take responsibility for this. I will do this. I will do that. I will do the other.”

Remember that God’s answer to your insufficiency is always His sufficiency. No matter how you come at these questions, we are going around in circles a bit because God is saying the same thing again and again and again. And Moses is saying the same thing. Moses is saying, “I can’t” and all these objections.

And God is saying in response to all of them, “I can.”

And do you know something? If you know those two things, you can live effectively for God, if you know, “I can’t; He can.”

Now of course there are gifts that God gives to people. There are abilities that He gives to some. And He uses those abilities. We don’t just say, “well, I have no ability to do certain things but I’m going to go do it anyway. You do what God calls you to do. And spiritual gifting is part of God’s means of fulfilling that through you. But the energy and the power and the authority and the cutting edge that comes through it doesn’t come from you.

Preachers don’t have authority. If they preach with authority, it’s because they are preaching truth that God confirms in their heart that this is true.

And the last objection Moses had – “I am inadequate, I am impotent, I am” (I lost them all now), “I am ignorant, I am incompetent.”

Last one: number five: “I am irrelevant” because he says in Verse 13, Moses said, “O Lord, please send someone else to do it.”

“I am actually irrelevant here.” It’s more than that of course. It’s that “I don’t actually want to do it.”

I am very sympathetic to Moses’ response here and I’ll tell you why. I have a theory based on experience and therefore it’s suspect, but I have a theory that very often – certainly in Christian living and Christian service – the best people to do a task or to do some tasks are people who don’t actually want to do them. They are often the best people to do them because they are less likely to have their own agenda, less likely to be interested in who gets credit, if anybody gets credit. They probably prefer to be out of sight than to be prominent.

Often it’s when God says, “I have selected you and I am sending you and I am giving you this to do,” you know, “God there must be somebody else.” They are often the best people for the job.
I get resumes from people writing seeing if there is something – possibility of some position going here at the Peoples Church and man, they tell me the most fantastic things about themselves. And I don’t go beyond opening it, reading it and it ends up being filed in my bin. I don’t want somebody like that working here who says, “I am the answer to this need you have got. Man, I am just the bee’s knees.” But that’s what some resumes say but never before God. When you present your resume to God, “God, here I am, warts and all, all the issues of my life that disqualify me.”

And God comes back with His answer: “You can’t; I can.”

And God responds to Moses by saying, “Send somebody else”, by being cross with him. It says, “The Lord’s anger burned against Moses.”

“Moses, you know, every time I say something you are back with another objection to it.” But He says, “Alright,

“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 to 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 is if you were God to him.”

You know, let’s be realistic, sometimes we need an Aaron, somebody to go around with us. The first time I got involved in trying to witness when I was young, going into coffee bars in England, which was the place where young people hung out in those days, I am so very grateful that I had some Aaron’s to go with.

And I would say – you know, because I didn’t know how to talk to people and I was a little bit tongue-tied anyway – “I’ll come with you. You do the talking and I will grunt at the right place and say, ‘Yeah, yeah, it’s true’ but you do the talking.”

And I’m so glad I had some people who did that. And sometimes I learned more than the person there. I remember once going into a coffee bar with a guy whose name was Frank. It was his personality as well as his name – he was very frank. And we were talking to a young guy about 16 or 17 who was very interested in what we were saying.

And my friend said to this young man, “Can you think of any good reason why you shouldn’t become a Christian tonight?”

And the man thought for a moment and said, “No, I can’t.”

And I was thinking, “Hallelujah, this is fantastic!”

And Frank said, “Alright, let me give you some. If you become a Christian tonight, Jesus Christ will become lord of your life. That means that you will ask about your future, not what do I want but what does God want me to do. You won’t marry the first pretty girl
that says yes to you; you’ll say, “Lord, who do You want me to marry, if You want me to marry? I give that part of my life to You.” And he gave whole list of things – you know, money (“I don’t know if you have got much money but it’s not yours anymore if you give your life to Christ tonight; it’s going to be His.”)

And I saw this guy begin to shrink in his seat. And I began to shrink in mine. And then Frank leaned across and said, “Can you still not think of any reason why you shouldn’t become a Christian tonight?”

And the guy said, “Well, I can think of some now.”

So Frank said, “Alright, don’t become a Christian till you are ready to surrender all these things to Christ.”

We left, we got out on the street, and I was angry with Frank. I said, “Frank, that guy was so close and you have scared him away.”

He said, “What did Jesus do?”

I said, “Forget about what Jesus did; what did you do that I am concerned about.

“No,” he said. “No,” he said. We went and sat down and with his New Testament he showed me how the times like the rich young ruler, Jesus sent him away with nothing.

I said, “But what if this guy walks in front of a bus on his way home tonight and you missed the opportunity?”

And he said, “No, no, it wouldn’t have been a real conversion; that would have been a superficial come into my heart to make my life good type; that’s not real conversion. You trust God with the time it will take for God to draw him to Himself.”

What about these people who walk no more with Him? And Jesus said to His disciples, “Do you also want to leave? You can leave as well if you like.”

I mean that doesn’t sound like a very good evangelistic tactic does it? I am going to give the invitation now – the invitation is go out through the back door if you want to stay – off you go.

I am sidetracking there because the point it it’s good to have an Aaron sometimes.

And actually Moses and Aaron become linked together for the rest of Moses’ – almost the rest of Moses’ life – Aaron died a couple of years earlier than Moses in the wilderness. But Moses and Aaron did this, Moses and Aaron did that and Moses and Aaron went here and Moses and Aaron went there.
And of course that’s not Plan B. Jesus sent out His disciples two by two. We give encouragement to each other. We give courage to each other. And sometimes, you know, in this kind of going and talking to people, which Moses has to do, you know, when one starts talking, you know, it kind of primes the pump and the other then starts talking.

But the basic principle that lies behind all this is when we realize we can’t do it, we discover that if we are going to do anything of any lasting value, the strength is going to be in God, it’s going to be His strength, His sufficiency, His working in us and through us.

And you know, that doesn’t mean everything is going to go smoothly. We’ve got to resist this temptation to always measure what God is doing. What happened in Egypt was that things got worse before they got better. Moses went to Egypt, had a disastrous conversation with Pharaoh, ended up with the door slammed in his face, being sent out. “I will not let these people go”.

Nothing was accomplished and worse: he then sent orders down to the slave drivers, “These men who are making bricks, building the city of Ramses, you make them build bricks without straw.” Now straw is what holds the brick together and so the Israelites say, “How come we have to make bricks without straw? This is almost impossible. You put anything on this brick and it will crumble. What’s the reason for this?”

“Well it’s because of Moses.”

“Moses? Moses, you’re making things worse for us. Get back to the desert.”

You know, don’t try to measure success the way we do humanly. And even his leading was confusing because Chapter 14 Verse 2 says that,

“Pharaoh will think, ‘The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.’”

This is not the forty years wandering when they were going to be out wandering out of their disobedience; this is now – they are not going in a straight line, they look, you know, the whole lot of them look as though they are drunk. They are kind of swaggering and swaying and they are not going in the same direction.

Why? I’ll tell you why. They weren’t following a plan, they weren’t following a road map; they were following a pillar of cloud by day, which was God Himself, and a pillar of fire at night. They were not following a plan; they were following God. And God takes detours sometimes and we don’t know quite why. The quickest way from A to B is a straight line but this has gone all around here and back up again. Why? “I don’t know but we’re just following God.”
It doesn’t always work out in ways that look good and feel good. And we have to trust God and go on trusting God. And God did bring about his purpose; He did take the people to the land flowing with milk and honey. Moses didn’t arrive there himself; he died before they got there. There were all kinds of obstacles on the way; there were all kinds of things that went wrong. There was all kinds of disobedience on the way as well.

But the point is that when Moses at the end of his conversation had all his questions responded to by the same answer – “I will be with you, I am who I am, I will give you what to say, I will perform signs to the people in front of you. Moses, it’s your dependence on Me that is the key to everything happening and you won’t take credit for it. As Jesus said, ‘They will see you good works but they will praise your Father who is in heaven.’”

Why praise Him for your good works? Because the origin of your activity is God Himself. And the divine adequacy played out through the human inadequacy, the divine sufficiency played out through the human insufficiency, the divine truth played out through human frailty is what makes the Christian life dynamic and effective and fruitful.

And as a missional church, which is only that as it’s full of missional people – it’s not just the task that is our preoccupation; it’s the source of that task – the presence, the life, the enabling, the Spirit, the power of God Himself working in us, working through us.

And maybe this morning you have looked into this Scripture and looked into a mirror and you say, “You know I have been stunted for years, I have been sitting back for years. I love the idea that people are getting involved in serving God and I would love to do it myself, but who am I? I don’t know what to say. O Lord, please send other people.”

You are actually in very good company, but there are answers to every one of those reasons. Will you take those answers to heart and say, “God, use even me – me?”

And He will. Let’s pray together.

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