

**“What’s in Your Hand?” - Exodus 4:1-5 – Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs**

Last week, with the help of Mike Slaughter’s book *Dare to Dream*, we dealt with our big buts—all of our excuses as to why we can’t do what God wants us to do. Mike looked at the responses God gave back to Moses and his objections/excuses except he saved one for this message. When Moses asked God what if they don’t believe me or listen to me and say the Lord did not appear to you, and then the Lord said to him, what is in your hand? A staff, a stick, what am I going to do with a stick? Now the problem is that you and I tend to focus on what we don’t have. In God, everything you need you have already been given. In God, everything you need to accomplish the mission you were created for, you have already been given. God uses our ordinary gifts, talents and life experiences when we just take them for granted.

What is a shepherd’s staff? It is an everyday tool in Moses’ toolbox. Moses never conceived that through this ordinary tool he used every day, God would accomplish an extraordinary miracle. For a shepherd, a staff was used for stability. Consider the terrain where these people herded their sheep. They needed to be able to brace themselves to stay on the mountain. Another purpose for a staff is as a weapon if robbers or wild animals attacked. Let’s think about it. There was no way Moses could conceive that a staff would be used to fulfill God’s mission.

Moses actually became a shepherd through failure. That staff represents that failure. He was prince of Egypt. It’s quite a fall from the palace to the pasture. Shepherds were lowest on the rung of society, so God was going to use Moses’ failure for God’s redemptive purpose. You have been equipped with everything you need to accomplish the mission for which you were created. Think for a moment of a little seed. One little seed contains all of the genetic coding to create that which it is intended to create. You can go out to the Sequoia National Park and see these giant trees. All of that came from one little seed. All of the genetic code to grow that tree is already contained in that one seed. One human embryo contains all of the DNA to create a mature human being. So if all of the gifts God wove into you in your mother’s womb and all of the gifts, all of the talents were there, what’s the Holy Spirit’s part?

It may be winter outside now, but the Holy Spirit is like the warmth of the spring soil that awakens these latent gifts and talents in you. That is what happens in the new birth. The Holy Spirit awakens these latent gifts and talents. That’s what it means, once you were dead, but now you have new life; it’s awakened. The more we learn to submit to the Holy Spirit and we say, Holy Spirit I give you my mind, my thoughts. Holy Spirit I surrender my mouth, my speech. Holy Spirit I give you my hands that they may serve your every purpose. Holy Spirit I give you my feet that I only go and follow where ever Jesus leads. The more I surrender to the Holy Spirit, then the more powerful God’s influence becomes through my talents and gifts in the world. Everything you need you have already been given.

There are three helpful questions to help identify gifts and talents. The first one is centered on gifts of the head. Here is the question to ask. What do I know a lot about? What is the thing I know a lot about but it’s more than most people around me know? The

second is the gift of your hands. What do you do better than a lot of people around you? The third is the gift of your heart. What are you the most passionate about? We are born; we are wired for this purpose in the world. The first question is what is in your hand. Everything you need you have already been given. The second is a command; throw it to the ground. Think about that for a minute. Throw it is a declarative action. It is a commitment to join an enterprise. Through the years that expression has in different generations has become “throwing down the gauntlet” or “throwing my hat in the ring”. It is a bold definitive declaration. In faith you have to release it to increase it. You have to take what you have been given and you have to put it back in God’s hand and don’t take it up until God puts it back in your hand. When God puts it back in your hand, it’s no longer just a stick its God’s stick. From that time on, Moses didn’t refer to it as his staff he called it God’s staff. Moses would use it to bring on the plagues, to separate the sea, and bring water from the rock in the wilderness.

What’s in your hand? We have to utilize what God has placed in our hand not what we wish we had. No matter how much or how little, we have to utilize what God has placed in our hand. Actions create energy; write that down. Thinking doesn’t create energy; actions create energy. You can’t think your way into a new way of acting. You have to act your way into a new way of thinking. Acting by faith on God’s promise is the only resource you need and when you give your best, you can trust God with the rest. Alleluia and Amen.

### What Is That in Your Hand

Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs 1/24/23

What is that in your hand?  
At the bush God asked Moses.  
To do what God had planned,  
All that's needed he did possess.

What is it that we have,  
In our hand, our heart, our head?  
If we only believe,  
We have been blessed by God.

Rather than complaining,  
About things that we have not,  
Us God is sustaining,  
We are gifted by God a lot.

Go in faith and wisdom.  
God who made you goes with you.  
Live into God's Kingdom.  
For God will see you through.