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Life seems to have punctuated our examination of Moses, from his birth, his royal upbringing, and his quest to meet his birth parents which ended with him becoming a fugitive from justice!

At the age of 80, God called Moses to a very special mission, the meaning of which resonates throughout human history. God chose Moses to lead His people from slavery in Egypt, through a perilous journey, to a land where they would live as worshipping people for the Glory of God. This special mission, the journey itself, is a preview of the journey of salvation for **ALL**. In the new year, as we embark on a new chapter in our journey with God, we shall use the steps of this journey, from **hearing** God's plan, being **invited** to be a part of it, experiencing **deliverance**, trusting God's care, **being transformed** into God's people and living as members of His family, and finally entering God's presence.

Last month, we left Moses objecting to God's call to lead His people out from slavery in Egypt. His first three objections were:

1. Who am I that you should choose me?
2. What shall I say to people who ask, *Who are you?*
3. What if they don't believe me?,

reflecting his inadequacies, his low self-esteem, his feeling of being unfit for any purpose other than being a shepherd of his father-in-laws' flock.

God persisted, enabling Moses to perform miracles to demonstrate God was with him, but Moses offers two more excuses telling God He was mistaken! *Lord! Send someone else!*

On Friday, a Baptist minister conducting research for his Doctorate at Spurgeon's College in Croydon, came to chat about our experience of mission. One of the questions for which he is gathering data, ***Does being part of a community, influence how you think about "mission"?***

The question lies at the heart of Moses' life. Was Moses so removed from his Hebrew identity, he was unable to identify with God's mission?

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What we think of, and how we respond to God's mission, depends on who we think we are.

Moses grew up believing, *Life revolves around me! I was a special baby; I was a privileged person in the king's palace; I took a wrong turn and life dealt me a bad hand; here I am, a shepherd caring for a man's flock of sheep, because I married his daughter. This is best I can do for myself.*

This self-centred mindset, *Woe is me!*, explains the excuses Moses offered God: who am **I**? What shall **I** say, what if they won't believe **me**?

The world has not changed! It still wants us to believe, ***I am the most important person in this world!*** L'Oreal tells us, *because I am worth it!*; Clairol asks, *Does she or doesn't she?*; Nike says, it doesn't matter, *Just do it!*; a few years ago McDonald's said, *You deserve a break today!*; Burger King responded, *Have it your own way!*; Sprite says, *Obey your thirst!*; Snickers says, *You are not you when you are hungry!*; and it goes on, and on and on, and generation after generation live these slogans as a part of their lives! So when a person picks up a gun and shoots people, they are only obeying what Nike says, ***Just DO it!***

We need to be careful of the allure of the trilogy of the self: ***I, me and myself.*** Not only can it lead us astray, away from a safe path, it narrows our view of the possible.

Among ***all*** the righteous people in the Bible, there is an exclusive club of five special men (*there are also many righteous women!*):

Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel and Isaiah. Each of these men was personally called by God to serve in His kingdom, each in a special role.

When God called Abraham by name (*to tell him to sacrifice his son*) he replied, ***Here I am!***<sup>1</sup> When God called Jacob and told him not to fear going to Egypt to be with his son Joseph, Jacob replied, ***Here I am, Lord!***<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 22:1 & 11.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 46:1-2

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The response, **Here I am** in English, is a single word in Hebrew<sup>3</sup>, the meaning of which is much deeper than what we understand in English - **Here I am** - present and listening! (*like school!*)

When Isaiah is transported outside of time into the presence of God and heard God ask, **Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?**, Isaiah replied using the same single Hebrew word, **Here am I! Send me**<sup>4</sup>, which conveys a deeper understanding of the word, **I am ready, willing and able, only give the order and I will go!**

When God called the young boy Samuel by name, and he mistook it to be the priest Eli, he replied twice, **Here I am Lord!**, and finally the third time he used the same singular Hebrew word which is translated as, **Speak Lord, for your servant is listening**, Samuel is anticipating God revealing something significant. Before hearing what it is, Samuel is ready to respond positively!

Now, when God encountered Moses at the burning brush in the desert and called him by name, Moses also replied, **Here I am!**

Although Moses replied with the one Hebrew word which conveys, **I am ready to go, when and wherever you send me**, is he really ready?

Look at two clues: Moses' final words are not **Here I am Lord! I'm ready! You've convinced me! Now send me!** He says instead, **Lord! Send someone else!**<sup>5</sup>

Moses returns home to his father-in-law, but does not reveal his dialogue with God. *Please let me return to my relatives in Egypt. I don't even know if they are alive!*<sup>6</sup> Does this sound like a man who is convinced God knows what He is doing?

Despite all God's assurances, *I will be with you, I will give you the words to speak, I will change their hearts...* Moses was not convinced, **he could do**

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<sup>3</sup> a single Hebrew word – hineni (הינני)

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 6:8

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 4:13

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 4:18

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**what God wanted him to do!** Moses was a victim of the *trinity of the self*: he looked at his own life, saw problems and failures - *I can't do it Lord, neither can you do it for me. I won't let you!*

You see, when God calls each of us to be a part of His plan on earth. God does not expect us to do His work against the odds, in the face of great difficulty, facing impossible situations.

God will never ask us to do something, which He would not do Himself. Knowing our weakness, God offers us His strength, His wisdom and His resources to do, what He asks of us!

The prophet Isaiah comforts God's people with this assurance, ***When you call, the Lord God will answer, "Here I am!", and He will come quickly!***<sup>7</sup>

Advent and Christmas is that time of year when we celebrate this promise of God coming true - God responds to our call, ***Where are you, Lord? This world is spinning out of control***, and he answers, ***"Here I am!"***, and He will arrive quickly!

The question is, are we ready to accept God's leadership, His plans and purposes? If our lives are focussed on ourselves, what ***I*** can do, what ***I*** can achieve, then we shall remain hopelessly stuck and frustrated.

When God calls each of us by name, he wants to hear, ***Here I am! I am ready! I am willing and I am able! Tell me what to do... where to go***, and he will respond, ***Here I am to help you.***

Christmas is one of the times in the year, when we are faced with his question: Are we ready for this ***Here I am*** relationship with our God? He is! Are we ready?

**AMEN.**

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<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 58:9