

But it meant so much to my daughter and without leaders, there was not going to be a troop. So last spring, three other busy moms and me agreed that we would all participate as co-leaders. None of us felt we could do it alone. There's a lot more coordination necessary when so many leaders are involved; and we all have very different personalities. But the task is also more manageable this way. It feels like maybe we can actually do this good thing for the girls who are participating. And the planning meetings where I'm getting to know these other leaders have been kind of fun. So it makes me want to do it a little more, too. After a recent meeting, one of the co-leaders texted us all saying, "Can't tell you how nice it is to feel like there's so much collaboration. Definitely feels like the weight is much lighter and looking forward to the year ahead!"

In this time, there are some lighthearted callings like kids' activities, and even some church committees or volunteering. I think there are also some weightier callings to: deciding what, when, and how to speak out about important issues. The calling to be generous with our time and our resources. The calling stand up for what is right and just, even when we may stand alone or risk something precious. Once God has called us to these tasks, God is determined to use us to bless our neighbors and to share love widely. So with Moses as our example, we trust that, usually, God will compassionately work through our reluctance to bring us around to a 'yes.'

All of God's responses to Moses' objections were good news. Those responses are also good news for our holy callings at home, in church, and in the community. God promises to be with us. God promises to accompany us. God knows our gifts and is already equipping us to serve. But one of the most tangible and helpful responses God gives is to gift us with other people to help us. People like Aaron, Lionel and like the people in the pews next to you who want to support you in your callings. God sends us people who can listen and offer guidance. Or people to take one small piece of the project that lightens our load. Or people to teach us a new skill so that we can claim our role. Or simply other people to serve alongside us, so there is camaraderie and joy in the doing of important work. That doesn't let us off the hook by any stretch. And sometimes, that help is just for a time, until we can be prepared to claim our role more fully. But what a gift those helpers are, right when we need them. What a sign of God's deep compassion and presence. God believes in our abilities and giftedness so much as to meet our 'I don't wanna's' with tangible assistance and love from the people around us.

All glory and honor, thanks and praise be to God. Amen.



First Presbyterian Church
of Royal Oak

September 28, 2025

16th Sunday after Pentecost

"I Don't Wanna"

Rev. Emma Nickel

Scripture: Exodus 2:23-25; 3:1-15; 4:10-17

“Oh my Lord, please send someone else.” I have thought that before. I’d be willing to bet that you have, too. Maybe it happens when we face a small task that just feels like too much of a hurdle—making that particular phone call or dealing with a difficult email. Or maybe when we have a really big thing that looms in front of us—taking on a leadership position, sorting out a mess at work, or figuring out an impossible family situation. Certainly we have been right there with Moses. “Please God, I just don’t think I can do this. Isn’t there someone else?”

There are a couple things at the root of that feeling. There is, first, the sense that we ourselves *cannot* do it. That the task is too enormous, too weighty, too complex. And we are just not going to be capable of doing it. But second, there is the sense that we do not want to do it. It will be too messy, too inconvenient, too strenuous, and it may ruin a lot of our days. So please, can we choose to take a pass on this one?

These words of Moses were the last ones Moses spoke to God in the passage we read today. As the wonder and amazement of the burning bush sank in, Moses and God talked at length. God made the profound declaration of Moses’ call. I suspect God thought this would be the announcement and then things would be settled: “I’ve seen the suffering of the people and their oppression. I have heard them and I want to deliver them to a good and peaceful life. So I will send you, Moses, to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt.” But the calling was anything but settled. Without wasting a breath, Moses immediately showed his reluctance with a litany of questions and objections: “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh? What shall I say is the name of this God who is sending me? Suppose the people do not believe me or listen to me? I have never been eloquent; my speech is not good.”

Whether God expected them or not, God patiently responded to every single objection, trying to reassure Moses. God responded in turn: “I’ll be with you all the way. Tell them my name is I am who I am—see if that will give them something to think about while they listen to you. Don’t you think

I know you can't speak well—I'm the one who made you for heaven's sake!" In part of the text we didn't have time to read, God even demonstrated some amazing signs to share with the people that would reveal God's true presence. God helped Moses turn his staff into a snake and then made his hand look withered and pale. There was even a back-up sign on offer, just in case: with God's help, Moses could turn some drops of water from the Nile River into blood. So God accommodated every objection, until Moses made his final request that God just find someone else for this job.

And we cannot fault Moses for saying that. What God was asking was extraordinary. God was calling one guy, Moses, to help the people walk away from an economic system that had abused and enslaved them for generations. God was asking Moses to defy the most technologically advanced empire in the region. God was asking a man who had not just a fear of public speaking, but an actual speech issue, to go up against the Pharaoh who had more power and money and backing than anyone. We should give Moses some credit for the fact that he entertained the possibility of this calling at all.

The callings in our lives look a lot different than Moses'. Sometimes we sense that these tasks and projects truly come from God. The Holy One relies on us to do certain things that lead to love, justice, peace and compassion. And then, some of our callings are much more mundane—maybe just things that fall to us to do because of our family or work. Reluctance for any of our callings can be reasonable. Especially for the really hard or messy or intricate tasks. Besides perhaps Mary, there are not a ton of people in the Bible who readily agreed to what God was calling them to do. Even she had some questions before she said, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me according to your word." Most of us are a lot more like Moses. We have a lot more objections. We can state a long list of questions about why God needs us, before we may, in the end, try to sidestep some of our callings entirely; or at least wish that we could.

God's patience had thinned by the time Moses said, "I don't wanna do it." "The anger of God was kindled," the scripture says. We've seen over the past few weeks in Genesis how God relied on human, fallible people to carry out the divine plans. God needed Abraham to truly trust and follow. God chose to keep working through Jacob even though he was not really on the straight and narrow. And here, God needed Moses to take this next step toward freeing the Hebrew people, so that they could continue their calling to bless the whole world.

In the 20th century, there was another famous person who did not speak well, but who was also called to leadership at a critical moment. The movie *The King's Speech*, made in 2010, recalled the true story. Prince Albert of England, or Bertie as he was called, had a difficult childhood and could not

remember a time when he spoke as others do. He had what was called then a stammer, a stutter. He struggled to get words out and public speaking was a nightmare. One speech he tried to give at Wembley Stadium in 1925 was filled with long, awkward, and painful pauses and his audience was aghast. As a prince with an older brother, Bertie never expected to have to be king and thought he would not have to give that many speeches. But through a course of twisting family events, Bertie acceded to the throne as King George VI in 1938. So Bertie's calling had arrived. He was now faced with a monumental task, at a critical period in Europe, just when impressive speeches on the radio had become the prime way that leaders communicated with their people. Surely Bertie felt as Moses did. "I'm not sure I can do it and I really don't want to."

But Bertie's wife sought out an unorthodox treatment for his speech difficulties. An Australian named Lionel Logue had no medical training, but had shown success in treating others who struggled to speak. During covert visits to Lionel's home and in the course of unconventional methods, Lionel demonstrated to Bertie that he could overcome his struggles. He could wrestle with the difficulties of his childhood and the fears of his office to speak to his subjects without embarrassment. And eventually, he did. Following the declaration of war on Nazi Germany in 1939, the King delivered from Buckingham Palace a clear and powerful radio address to his subjects and to the world. Lionel sat in front of him and directed his speech from the first word to the last. And then watched as the King stepped on to the palace balcony and waved to the cheering and adoring crowds below. Lionel was present for speech the King gave throughout the war.

The King was able to embrace his high and difficult calling because he had a companion to go the road with him. He found a teacher and supporter to help him until he was able to fulfill the calling on his own. Without that blessing and gift, the King might not have been able to carry out the high and heavy calling of speaking to his people during one of the greatest trials they had ever encountered.

A calling—especially a difficult one - feels different when there is a person beside us, helping us. At first, God was put out by Moses' request to be let off the hook. But we don't hear God rage or punish. Neither did God relent in this important calling. God knew very well that Moses was the person for the job, taking into account all his gifts and his shortcomings. So God offered Moses a companion in his brother, Aaron, who was a good speaker. God offered Aaron to accompany Moses, to help him with doing the task, so that he didn't have to go it alone.

I have agreed to be a Brownie Girl Scout co-leader for my daughter's troop this year. It wasn't really something I was looking to add to my plate.