

Yes, But

Scripture: Exodus 3: 10 - 22; 4: 1 – 20

July 24th, 2022

For today's message. Those in person worshippers will need to use their pew Bible and those watching virtually will need to locate a Bible for today's message. Let us begin –

Have you ever carried on a lively debate with God? Have you ever tried to change God's mind on some matter? Have you argued with God about some issue or circumstance in your life? Have you?

Moses first step in his journey of discipleship is to do exactly that! Moses argues with God! Moses carries on a lively debate with God! Moses tries to change God's mind! Moses argues with the God of the ages!

Moses quickly becomes defensive in this extraordinary calling he has received. Moses is convinced he cannot respond. He plays the game of 'Yes, But!' with God.

Have you played that game - 'Yes, But'? You know the game? When we feel called to do something we rather not do, we are tempted to say – 'Yes, But'. Any time we are compelled to do something we would rather not do, we are tempted to say – 'Yes, But'! Kids play this game all the time. Adults play this game all the time. A person makes a request of you, and you play the game – 'Yes, But something'!

Think of all the times you have played 'Yes But ...'?

Moses plays the game of – 'Yes, But' - with God in our first and second scripture readings. In our first scripture reading, Moses plays the game – 'Yes, But' - twice. And in total, Moses plays the game – 'Yes, But' - five times.

Let's start out looking at Moses' first two 'Yes But' moments. Moses' first 'Yes. But ...' question was a simple question - 'But ... who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt.' Probably Moses was simply thinking - Hey, I am too old for this job. I've just gotten my pension check into a direct deposit cycle in my bank account. I am enjoying my AARP discounts. I am not ready for a whole new mission in life. Or Moses is saying to God - Yes, But I am too old!

Moses was about eighty years old when the call of God came. This is hardly the time when we think of a whole new vocation in our lives. Yes, But #1!

God simply says - 'I will be with you, Moses.' God does not acknowledge Moses' argument. Neither does God acknowledge Moses' age or stage of life. God simply calls. Let me repeat that - God simply calls!

Moses' second 'Yes, But', comes when he asks God for his name. Moses says, 'Yes, but what is your name?'

The name of God was closely intertwined with the nature of God in the ancient mind. In the 23rd Psalm it says - He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Moses was actually asking how he could offer the definitive nature of their God to the Israelites. Moses says - 'If I go and they ask me about you, what shall I say?' or Moses says, 'Yes, but what is your name?'

The response of the voice from the burning bush is one of the most mysterious in all of scripture. God says - 'I am who I am!' Boy, that answer has always bothers me! Let me explain -

'Yahweh' is the Hebrew name for God. It came to the Jewish people in 300 BC. The name of God was too sacred to be spoken so Jewish people would often eliminate all the vowels and just use 'YHWH' as God's name. Jewish people refused to pronounce God's name so they say 'Hashem' meaning 'the name' or 'Adonai' meaning 'Lord' to give this name sanctity. 'Yahweh' has been translated as - 'I am who I am', 'I am', 'I will be', 'I was', 'I shall be' or 'Lord'.

Moses is to tell the people that "I am" has sent him.

I sure hope you know this comedy skit. It is probably my favorite skit. The skit is by Abbott and Costello and it is called 'How's on first, what's on second, and I do not know, third base'. My best friend and I tried to do this skit for our Senior Day in High School. We got up on stage and started out OK, but it was not long before we both started laughing and getting confused! This happened when we got to the part where Lou Costello ask Bud Abbott about who gets the check for playing first base on the team. (Talk them through this part)

As confusing that comedy skit is, we are not able to probe the mystery of God's nature. God preserves God's mystery for all time. God is not about to open up the full mystery of being to Moses in this moment of Moses' life.

Perhaps God is offering a name that is only finally completed in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is called - the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Door of the Sheep, the True Vine, the Good Shepherd (my favorite!), and the Resurrection and the Life.

Many wonderful names, maybe my Lord and Savior fits best!

Now in our second scripture reading Moses says – 'Yes, But' - three more times. Unflappable in his desire for some kind of permanent deferment from his calling, Moses raises three more – 'Yes, But' - arguments.

Please look at our second scripture and see if you can find the next three – 'Yes, But' - arguments. The scripture is Exodus 4: 1 - 20. Please look in your Bible or your pew Bible and if you wish, write your three – 'Yes, But' - arguments that Moses uses in the space in your bulletin. You have three minutes to do this.

(Put in bulletin room for three – 'Yes, But' moments)

(Pause for three minutes)

#3 – ‘Yes, But’ - argument - But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me or they do not believe that the Lord appeared to me.

In effect, Moses is saying - Yes, but what if I go to preach and nobody listens to me or even cares?

Oh, this is one fear that every preacher has when working on a message. I have said this - Yes, But Lord, what if the people do not listen? Yes, But Lord, what if the people are too busy to listen. Yes, But Lord, what if they do not come to worship? Yes, But Lord, what if my words make no contact at all? Yes, But Lord, what if the message makes no difference? Yes, But Yes, But Yes, But

God replies convincingly to Moses, he says - ‘Moses, I will create signs and wonders before you. I will make the fruits of your ministry happen. I will make things happen in your wake.’

That’s quite a promise. This is the part of this message that spoke directly to me. I have questioned my abilities to lead a church as the pastor and I have questioned my ability to inspire people to serve Jesus Christ. God has told me that he will create signs and wonders before me. God will make the fruits of this ministry happen. God will make things happen in the wake of this church. That’s quite a feeling.

I hope and pray that you all feel the same way?

#3 – Yes, But, for Moses – ‘Yes, But, what if they do not follow or listen to me’.

#4 - Moses relentlessly hurls his fourth – ‘Yes, But’ - at God. Emotions are running high when Moses trembles at the thought of what might be unavoidable. Moses says - ‘O my Lord, I have never been eloquent ... I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.’ Moses pleads that he mumbles a lot, and he cannot think on his feet, and he does not always use good grammar. Moses says that he stutters and is not a good preacher.

In a way Moses is saying - ‘Yes, But - I am not the person, for I have physical handicaps.’

God’s response to Moses’ self-imposed ineptness is wonderful! God says, ‘I will be with your mouth!’

We should remember the promise Jesus made to the disciples where he told them that they will receive the words to speak when they stand before power and before enemies. That promise is very similar to God's promise to Moses.

Yes, But, #4 – 'I am not the person for you Lord, I do not have the skills'.

And finally, Moses fifth – 'Yes, But' - argument. This fifth one exasperates the patience of God. Moses says - 'O my Lord, please send someone else!'

Here we have Moses' last desperate plea to avoid the interruption of a very pleasant existence. Moses says - 'I really do enjoy retirement, Lord. And those senior discounts at the fast-food counters and restaurants and movie theaters are really nice. God, you do not really want me to go to Egypt, do you?'

The storyteller says - 'Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses.' God is frustrated with all of Moses' excuses. And God is frustrated with all of our excuses. I am sure that our - Yes, But - frustrate our Lord.

In the end, God tells Moses that Aaron will be called to be alongside of Moses. Moses will give Aaron the words of God to speak, and God will be with both of their mouths. In essence God says - 'No more objections, Moses, Now go!'

Moses went in faith. Someone has said that faith is most simply 'waiting for the rest of the story to unfold.'

You may be called. God may interrupt your life - either briefly or for the long haul. You may give your – 'Yes, But' - to God a few times yourself. However, in the end, you will find yourself saying –

'OK, Lord! Here I Am. I have heard your call. I think I know your name and your nature. Here I am, Lord. Lead me to where the hurt is. Help me set your people free. And I will go.'

Let us conclude this message by singing 'Here I Am, Lord' #452 in the Blue Chalice Hymnal. Sandy Stark will sign these words for you.

(Sing the song)