

It was just another routine day in the desert. Up early in the morning, Moses had stopped at Jittery Pharaoh Coffee Shop, picked up a large Dark Egyptian Roast to go with his bagel, and then out to Mt. Horeb tending the sheep.

Then all heaven broke loose – the burning bush and God’s voice and Moses standing on holy ground!

God was calling Moses into service, giving him a mission, and what did Moses do - Moses, of all people, was guilty of what’s called ‘passing the buck’!

“Pass the buck” – the phrase comes from poker, the card game. A buck was a marker that indicated whose turn it was to deal. Passing the buck moved the deal onto the next player, his responsibility – therefore, we pass the buck – we pass the responsibility to someone else; it’s not my responsibility now.

One of the things this story teaches us about God - God comes to us where we are. In the midst of the routine of our days, God comes looking for us and God calls and gives us a mission, a responsibility in our life as disciples of Jesus Christ.

But then, like Moses, when he was called, do we too ‘pass the buck’?

You know, for Moses, life in the desert was predictable. He was making a living – married, supporting a family, obligations, commitments, nothing glamorous, but relatively comfortable and routine.

And it’s true that the greatest church workers I know are made up of busy professionals, harried mothers and fathers trying to care for children and their schedules and retired people who ought, as some would argue, to be able to do whatever they want to do now that they finally have some time for themselves.

Is that it? Like Moses, for so many of us, we have things we have to do, and when God calls, well, there are choices to be made about our time.

“There’s a short poem entitled “No Time”: *There’s a loving letter I meant to send, there’s a visit I meant to pay, There’s a careless habit I hope to mend, When I have the time someday. I’ll carry flowers to the sick and sad, you can trace my steps by hearts made glad, when I get the time someday. So somebody thought, so somebody said, But wasn’t it just a crime? Too busy with less important things, they never did get the time.*”

Isn’t that the story of many of our lives? We have all the time we are ever going to have, yet when we see the challenge, hear the call, we say ‘not now’ because we believe there’s always going to be time

Or maybe we pass the buck because we just don’t feel adequate, like Moses... surely, Lord, there’s someone better at whatever it is you want me to do.

Maybe so, but what God wants are those who grasp the honest humility that makes salvation and righteousness possible; as Paul describes us, “God chose what is foolish...weak...”

In a church like this, with nearly 1,100 members, we are always in danger of losing people to the assumption that they are not needed, who can want the joy of being in a working, growing, serving church, but feel they don’t need to make a commitment to serve.

I remember an elder at a Presbytery meeting saying that he had lived in his little town for a year before he even realized that there was a Presbyterian church in town.

And then one day he happened to drive by a little church, with paint peeling and shutters lopsided, and he thought to himself, “Now there’s a church that looks like it needs me.”

That is a much better question to ask – not “Does this church meet my needs?” but rather, “Does this church need me?” Or even better, “Where and in what way is God calling me to serve?”

I would rather have 1,100 members each doing one thing than 11 trying to do 100 things.

Someone commented on contemporary American church life saying that we have fallen into a way of life that he called The Mediocre Commission, that goes like this: *Then Jesus said unto them, "Go, invite people to come sit for an hour in worship once every six weeks or so, telling them that very little will be expected of them, that they will hear good music and that there will be coffee and doughnuts." But, Peter aggrieved and anxious said, "But, what if there is football?" And Jesus replied, "Well, that is a problem."*

Is that it? Do Christians pass the buck because we have accepted the Mediocre Commission?

I heard the story of a young minister – someone in his church called to say that they had just bought a new large-screen TV and would the church like their old TV, the big bulky kind.

He said, "Well, to be honest, the church would really like the new one!" Needless to say, the church received neither.

I like that minister!

Because it has often amazed, astounded, bewildered, baffled, confounded, confused, and concerned me that able, gifted, creative people are so timid, so lacking in ambition when it comes to Christian service.

I really don't know why some Christians pass the buck when it comes to service, and some of you will hear this as a challenge and others as a free ticket on a guilt trip; but I don't know why we pass on accepting our mission as disciples of Jesus Christ.

What I do know – I do know that Christ's work will be accomplished; because, thank God, there are those who confess: the buck stops here – I accept the responsibility...

Like Moses, who did eventually respond and obey, I know you who are committed, who give yourself fully and completely to God's call and God's grace.

We have a calling. We have a mission to tell the world about Christ. We have a social responsibility.

We're involved with our Food Sunday for the Food Bank and Daily Bread and hosting IHN week and Bethel Home reading ministries and so many more.

There is no way we can meet every need or support every organization. But we must do everything we can because we are responsible to do our share of putting back together a very broken and bruised world.

We are responsible, and every member here really is in the ministry.

We are responsible for providing first-class preschool and children ministries, and ministries for our youth and young families and senior adults and single adults.

Yes, that's our responsibility to communicate the love of Christ.

It is our responsibility to learn of the needs of those in our congregation, to carry them the comfort of a meal, the prayers for healing, to visit them when they're in the hospital.

We are the keepers of our brothers and sisters here in this congregation.

We have a financial responsibility to support the ministries of the church, the ongoing mission, just look at the signpost to worship on your bulletin: *In response to God's grace, the mission of First Presbyterian Church is to create a community where people seek the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rejoice in worship, and go forth sharing the love of Christ with Athens and the world!*

People walk in darkness and despair, and we offer them the light of encouragement. People are lost in loneliness and we offer them friendship and a family of faith. People are drowning in deprivation and we extend a hand to help

I see it in the joy of this sacrament of the Lord's Supper – as you and I accept the commission, the call, the responsibility as disciples of Jesus Christ and we pass...

We pass the bread of life and the cup of salvation to our neighbor.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY.