

Isaiah 55:8-11

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

Every summer I was home from college I liked to help coach little league teams. One summer I coached a senior little league team, which were I believe boys 13-15. My team was usually already picked for me since I was still in school when they had their draft day. This meant I was selected one decent pitcher and one decent catcher. The rest were usually the players none of the other coaches wanted.

If I learned anything from my father, he taught me that everyone on a team deserves to play the field and bat. Many coaches either let the poorer players play right field for the last inning and/or let them bat when the game was already decided. But I told my boys everyone would start at least one game and everyone would play and bat every game.

I made it a point rotate my players; if you did not start one game you would be rotated in, but you would start the next game. We had a decent team with some promising players, but there were a couple who regardless of how much practice they received they would probably not become any more proficient than they already were. I say this because the two boys I am speaking of were both terrified of the ball.

They jumped away when batting and when in the field they made sure the ball had landed and almost stopped rolling before picking it up and attempting to throw it somewhere within the infield.

This one particular game had us playing to one of the better teams in the league. We were coming into the middle innings and I was making my switches to make sure everyone played and batted. We were still holding our own and keeping it close. I made my final changes in personal and I put the second of two brothers in right field.

The top of the last inning we were batting and this boy jumped out of the way on three straight pitches. Then we took the field for the last inning. The other team ended up with a runner on second and third with two outs and one of their better hitters up. This batter was defiantly trying to hit to right field because he knew how scared he was of the baseball.

Sure enough the batter hit a fly ball to right field and sure enough he was back peddling as fast as he could to give the ball enough room to land safely. Once the ball hit the ground they would score three runs for sure and they would win.

Parents were screaming, players were screaming and he just kept backing up. That's when it happened! That's when everything changed for this boy and that team. This boy in right field back peddling to get away from the ball trips and falls straight back and, I kid you not, the ball landed and hit him in the stomach and as soon as he was hit his hands instinctively went to his stomach where he held the ball and that was all the umpire needed to see and called the final out.

The team ran out to right field and tried to lift him up, but with him crying they were unable to. But he realized he had done something good. He had done something special in spite of his fear. In spite of how poor his athletic skills were he overcame them and succeeded.

Ever felt like you were not the one to do certain things for God? Ever felt like you are not capable of doing what you believed God was calling or leading you to do? Last week we heard about Abraham following God when God really did not make much sense, at least as we saw things. This week is no different. God again is speaking to someone and this someone says thank you but no thank you, all because He does not believe he can do what God is calling him to do.

Joseph has died, and there was no one to lead the Hebrews. The pharaoh realized how large a group the Hebrew's had become so he enslaved them with cruel slave masters so as to keep them beat down. These slave masters forced the Hebrews to work from sun up to sun down building buildings which still stand today; the pyramids

Was God's purpose dead? Had God's plan been derailed? Was God taken by surprise by this pharaoh? No! What was happening to the Hebrews was spoken about 500 years earlier to Abraham by God in Genesis 15:13 *"Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years."*

Time had come for God to once again put His plan into motion; some say slow motion but motion none-the-less. A mother fearing for the life of her infant son places him in a wicker basket and floats him down the river to where the pharaoh's daughter bathed. She found this baby and took him in as her own.

Everything went great for this baby boy until, as a man, he defended a slave being beaten by one of the slave masters and he killed the slave master and buried him in the sand. After this, the young man ran into the desert wilderness and became a sheep herder; hiding away in his little world of sheep herding hoping to be left alone.

His life changed one day on Mt. Horeb when God appeared to him through a burning bush. God was calling Moses to go back and face pharaoh and tell him, not ask him but tell him to “*let His people go.*” And without hesitation Moses says, “I think you have the wrong guy.” Moses came up with a number of excuses as to why he was not the guy.

1. *“Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”*
2. *“When they ask me, ‘What is His name who sends me?’ what shall I say to them?”*
3. *“But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me?”*
4. *“O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”*

It is very apparent Moses is not the best choice for this job, but what we fail to understand is that God sees Moses' weaknesses as providing the best channel for God's strength. There is no way for Moses to take any credit or those around him to think Moses' dynamic personality and speaking skills could get the job done. The only possible way any of what was about to happen was through God's divine power and provision.

It makes no sense to choose anyone like Moses, and entrust him with such an important mission. But our view of the situation is limited, just like we covered last week. We seldom see situations the way God see them. This is why I chose the passage we read this morning from Isaiah 55. God sees what our finite eyes cannot.

Moses was one of the unlikeliest people God could have chosen. The job qualifications we put on tasks are usually different from God's. While we often focus on the externals; education, experience, personality, appearance, and demeanor, God looks on the inside. The only qualification God looks for in order to accomplish great things is a willing and obedient heart.

No matter what or how many obstacles seem in your way, if your heart is humble, open, and willing, God promises you exactly what He promised to Moses that day on Mt. Horeb *“I will be with you.”*ⁱ

Moses followed God’s leading and went to pharaoh, and each time pharaoh agreed to release the Hebrews he changed his mind, but it is what happens with pharaoh I would like us to see. During the first seven plagues pharaoh hardened his heart against God, but during the last three plagues God hardened pharaoh’s heart. This was so God could display His power in an overwhelming undeniable way.

This shows us that even people who do not follow God can and are used by God to accomplish His plan and purpose. To achieve His purpose God can and does use those who might be considered underdogs, those unlikely to accomplish great things. Moses is one such underdog. He was a murderer, a lowly shepherd, he was slow of speech which means he stuttered, but in spite of all he had going against him Moses prevailed against pharaoh.

Maybe you have a pharaoh in your life right now; a person, a circumstance, a condition. It might feel like this personal pharaoh you are battling against is in charge of your life, enslaving you to its demands. Do

not lose heart ... do not fear. Do not give up; it only appears your personal pharaoh is in control. God is not surprised by anything you are facing. God is fully and completely in charge.

As we ended with last week I believe it bears repeating Romans 8:28
“All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” God’s purpose and/or plan will work out, the question is, are you strong enough to face your personal pharaoh? Are you ready to be a underdog for God?

ⁱ Randy Frazee, *The Heart of the Story; God’s Masterful Design to Restore His People*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2011) pp. 54-57.