

Have you ever had somebody ask you to do something for them that was an inconvenience for you? You know, they ask you to give them a ride to the airport or the doctor's office, but you had other plans that morning? You are headed out the door for lunch with your friend when the phone rings and someone needs you come over right away; they are really upset. They ask you to help them move and it takes two days out of your busy week. They ask you to take care of their dog while they are out of town. They are your friends, neighbors, or church members, but you had other plans, you have things to do, or you are just tired. The word "inconvenience" and its derivatives come under different terms such as disruption, hassle, trouble, stress, difficulty, and ill-timed.

I have been thinking about this sermon topic for some time and finally sat down to write about it while on vacation in South Carolina last month. This morning, let's look at two biblical characters who were inconvenienced for the Lord. Since our Wednesday Bible Study just completed a study on Simon Peter, let's start with him. Our scripture text is taken from the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, verses 1-11.

Read Luke 5:1-11

Jesus has just started His ministry and is already drawing large crowds coming to listen to His teachings and to be healed. He is beside the Sea of Galilee. So, Jesus gets into the boat belonging to Simon Peter and asks him to push off from shore. Jesus wants to use Peter's boat as a floating pulpit. This will enable the people along the shoreline to see and hear Him better because the water will act as a sounding board.

After Jesus finishes teaching, He tells Peter to put out into the deep water and cast his nets. Now Peter and his brother Andrew and their partners James and John had been fishing all night and caught nothing. They were tired; they had cleaned their nets and laid them out to dry. They were ready to go home, get some breakfast, and go to sleep. In addition, remember Jesus was a carpenter by trade and they were the expert fishermen; what did He know about fishing. They knew that fishing with nets was better at night. After all, they had fished all night, caught nothing, and were discouraged. Talk about inconvenience; Jesus was asking a lot of Peter.

But look how Peter responded. Did he argue, start making excuses, throw up his hands and walk away. No! Peter replied: "Master, if you say so, I will let down the nets." He responded with obedience and trust in the Lord. And look what happened. They caught so many fish that their nets began to break and they had to call for their partners James and John to come help haul in all the fish. They filled both boats with so many fish that the boats began to sink.

It was a miraculous catch; it was a catch of a lifetime for Peter. In all of his years of fishing on the Sea of Galilee, he had never seen anything like this. He fell to his knees and said: "Go away

from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” To which Jesus replied: “Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching people – you will be a fisher of men and women.” Now I love what happened next: “So they pulled their boats up on the shore, left everything and followed Jesus.” Now that’s total commitment. They left their boats, fishing business, careers, and the greatest catch of their lives and walked away never looking back. They had found something more important in life; they had found Jesus. They didn’t have any idea what was ahead of them and how they would change history forever by their decision.

Let’s pause for a moment and think what would have happen if Peter had felt inconvenience and said no to Jesus’ request. Peter would have missed out on the opportunity of a lifetime, on his calling, his place in history, and the opportunity to make a difference. Now think about a time when someone has asked you to do something that was an inconvenience, and instead of saying no, you agreed to help them and it turned out to be a blessing and, in some ways, changed your life. I will admit that there have been times when we are driving over here from the Northeast Heights in the Wednesday afternoon traffic for class that I wonder why I am doing this. But after a time of great class discussion and fellowship, I feel inspired and blessed. Have you ever experienced that? What you thought was an inconvenience turned out instead to be a blessing.

Now there are many biblical characters who were inconvenienced for the Lord. For example, Abaham and Sarah were asked in their old age to pack up everything and move to a foreign, unknown land. Then there’s Joseph, Jacob’s favorite son, who was sold into slavery in Egypt by his jealous brothers as part of God’s plan to save Jacob and his family. Can you believe that God told the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute and have children to demonstrate how the Israelites had broken their covenant with the Lord and committed adultery.

Then there’s Mary who was asked to give birth to the Son of God. What about Joseph, her husband to be, who was told to marry her despite the child not being his own. And finally, our Lord and Savior Himself was often inconvenienced by the demands of the people He came to save. In Matthew 14, we are told that after receiving word that John the Baptist had been executed, Jesus withdrew to a solitary place to mourn and gather His thoughts. However, the crowds followed Him. The Bible tells us that instead of being put out as we would be, He had compassion on them, healed their sick, and fed over 5,000. It would have been so easy for Him to regard the people who invaded his privacy as a nuisance. They had interrupted His rest and disrupted His time to mourn. But no, He welcomed the people. He set an example for us to follow when we feel inconvenienced by others.

I could go on and on. You may be aware of other examples. The point is that at times God inconveniences His children in order to get His work done. While on vacation, I read a book about another biblical character who was inconvenienced for God. The book was entitled

*Moses in the Footsteps of the Reluctant Prophet* by Adam Hamilton. Most of us are familiar with the story of Moses. We know how he was rescued from the Nile River and raised as a prince of Egypt. Then years later, he had to flee for his life into the wilderness after he killed an Egyptian who was beating a fellow Israelite. He spends the next forty years in the wilderness tending the sheep of his father-in-law Jethro. This is where our story picks up this morning in the third chapter of the book of Exodus, verses 1-17a.

Read Exodus 3:1-17a

Moses is having a normal day tending the sheep when he spots an unusual site, a bush that appears to be on fire but is not consumed. So, out of curiosity, he approaches the bush. Then God calls out to him: "Moses, Moses!" Can you imagine that? Out of nowhere in the wilderness, Moses hears a voice calling his name. Now Moses had not heard God's voice before. So, he replies like the prophet Isaiah will do centuries later: "Here I am." Then God says: "Don't come any closer! Take off your sandals because you are standing on holy ground." This is where we get our opening hymn "Holy Ground." In other words, Moses is being told that he is in the presence of the Lord God. What an experience for Moses!

Then God introduces Himself: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hides his face, afraid to look at God because it was believed that if you saw the face of God you would die. Then God tells Moses what He wants him to do: "I have heard the cries of my people the Israelites. I want you to go back to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let my people go. Then I want you to lead them across the wilderness to the land that I promised their father Abraham."

Talk about being inconvenienced! God wants Moses who is 80 years old to leave his family, his career as a shepherd, and go back to Egypt, where by the way, he is wanted for murder. God wants him to go and tell the most powerful ruler in the world at that time to let his slaves, his workforce go, just because an unknown god says so. Can you imagine what Moses was thinking?

Former President George W. Bush was in an airport lobby and saw a man in a long flowing robe, with a white beard and hair. The man was carrying a long staff and some stone tablets under his arm. George W. approached the man and asked: "Aren't you Moses?" The man ignored him and started walking away. But George W. followed him and asked again: "Aren't you Moses?" He kept asking until finally the man turned around and responded in an irritated voice: "Yes I am." George W. asked him why he was so irritated. To which the man replied: "The last time I spoke to a Bush, I had to spend 40 years in the wilderness."

Now Moses did not respond as Peter did when he agreed to do what Jesus said. No way, in the verses following our scripture text, Moses starts making one excuse after another. First, he says

who I am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites to freedom; I'm just an old shepherd, a nobody. Have you ever refused a request or opportunity to serve the Lord because you didn't think you were qualified or the right person for the job. Think about all the missed opportunities you had in your life to make a difference.

Then Moses says suppose the people don't believe that I have met with the Lord God and the message that you have for them. When we have the opportunity to witness for the Lord and share our faith, there will be times when people may not listen to us and doubt what we are saying. But this must not stop us because you never know the impact you can make. Jesus said in the Parable of the Lost Sheep in the fifteen chapter of the Gospel of Luke: "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." When we obey God, we never know the difference it will make in someone's life.

Moses continued to try and find a way out by saying that he was not a good public speaker. Have you ever used this excuse when someone asked you to speak at Women with Purpose, lead worship at MorningStar, or lead a class? Since I did not get a good background in English at the one room school I attended in South Carolina, you have heard me butcher many words like I did in our scripture text. However, I keep going by remembering what God told Jeremiah when he gave a similar excuse when God called him to prophesy to the nation of Judah. The Lord put out His hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth and said: "Now I have put my words in your mouth." I also take assurance in Luke 12:11-12 where Jesus promises: "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourself or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say." When you walk in faith and trust in the Lord, sometimes you are amazed at what you have said.

Now Moses was running out of excuses while trying God's patience. After God had rejected all his excuses, Moses made one last attempt: "O my Lord, please send someone else." The Bible says that God's anger was kindled against Moses. Have you ever made God mad and tried His patience when you refused to do what He wanted you to do? Over the years, I have learned that there is no sense in arguing with God or making excuses. If He wants something done, it will be done. Now the question is will you join in and be part of the plan or will you reject the opportunity and miss out on serving Him and the blessing that He has for you. Of course, Moses finally agreed and went on to become the great lawgiver and servant of the Lord.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus used parables to convey His message and teachings to the people. One of my favorite parables that addresses inconvenience and missing out on the opportunities that God gives us is the Parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matthew 25. In this parable, at Judgment Day, Jesus separates the people as a shepherd separates the sheep and

goats based on how they have met the needs of the less fortunate such as feeding the hungry, providing water to the thirsty, and caring for the homeless, stranger, sick and those in prison.

It is key to note that the criteria used for separating the sheep and the goats is not that the sheep professed faith in Jesus Christ and the goats didn't. It's that the sheep reached out to the vulnerable when the opportunity presented itself, and the goats didn't. The sheep were willing to be inconvenienced for the Lord while the goats did not want to be bothered. So, our question for this morning is, are we the sheep or the goats?

Peter learned that Jesus routinely inconveniences His followers. Are you ready to be inconvenienced for the Lord? What we often perceive as setbacks or inconveniences – delays, failures or disruptions – may actually be God's way of inviting us into a greater story. God might be using these moments to realign our lives with His mission and to reach people we might otherwise overlook. We need to recognize that the inconveniences we encounter are there to help us grow closer to the Lord and to prepare us for what else might come in the future. What we may consider as an inconvenience could be an unrecognized or divine opportunity.

One of the most precious rights that we have is the right to bother God with our troubles and concerns at any time. So, shouldn't it seem logical that we should be willing to be inconvenienced when God wants us to help others and love our neighbors? The next time you feel inconvenienced by somebody or something, pause and think how you can make a difference for the Lord by saying yes and walking in faith. Amen