

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 7 Aug 2022

Sermon Title : The Call of Faith

Speaker : Rev Reuben Ng

Text : Numbers 22:5-29

INTRODUCTION

Although all of us are called to be full time Christians, only some of us may be called to full-time ministry. However, this does not mean that we only expect all those who are in full-time ministry to be involved in ministry work because Ephesians 4:11-12 reminds us that Jesus gives gifts to us, some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers as full-time ministers, to equip the saints (every believer) so that they can be engaged in God's ministry. Today's message is a call for us to respond in faith to God's call to full-time ministry and to equip the saints for ministry in the church.

Numbers 22:5-6

We are introduced to three characters in this passage - Balak, Balaam and the donkey. Balak was the King of the Moabites and though they were a group of people who were related to the Israelites they were not on friendly terms with them. Balak intended to invite Balaam to curse the Israelites as he was concerned that the Israelites were becoming too powerful and he was fearful of them. His intention was to conquer and drive them out of the land. Balak approached Balaam as he knew of the God-given ability that Balaam possessed.

Numbers 22:7-9

Balak sent elders of two nations, Moab and Midian, to represent him with a substantial fee to engage Balaam's services to curse the Israelites. When they came to Balaam, he requested for the elders to stay so that he could seek God's will. In God's conversation with Balaam in verse 9,

- It is helpful to understand that when God asked Balaam who the men were, God did not ask because He was ignorant. God is powerful and all-knowing and He knows what He is doing. Hence, it was asked because God wanted to converse with Balaam and gently lead him to a point of realization of what was in his heart; what he was thinking, feeling or believing. Something that Balaam did not know.
 - Similarly, through questions God asks us, and our conversations with God, we too can come to a realization of the parts of our lives that we may have false beliefs in, wrong perceptions or thinking and then come to a place that we can get right with him.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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Numbers 22:10-14

When Balaam had related to God Balak's intentions, *God said to Balaam, "You **must not** go with them; you **must not** curse the people, for they are blessed."* (v.12)

- God's response to Balaam is very clear and so Balaam proceeds to follow God's direction and sent the elders back to Balak.

Numbers 22:15-19

Once again Balak sent princes, more in number and more distinguished, to say to Balaam, *"Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: 'Please do not let anything hinder you from coming to me. For I will honour you greatly, and whatever you tell me I will do. So come, put a curse on this nation for me.'" (vv.15-17)*

- It is likely that these more distinguished princes brought a fee of greater amount besides the promises of honour if Balaam would do Balak's bidding.

But Balaam answered them, *"Even if Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I **could not** transgress the commandment of the LORD my God to do less or more." Now therefore, please stay the night here also, that I may know **what more** the LORD might say to me."* (Numbers 20:18-19)

- Even though Balaam declared that he would not disobey God, he invites the princes to stay and enquires the Lord again.
- Though God's word had been very clear to Balaam that he should not curse the Israelites (v.12), it seemed like Balaam was hoping that God would change his mind and allow him to do what Balak wanted. This shows that while Balaam was saying and doing the right things, his heart was likely inclined towards serving Balak's desire, probably having been swayed by the promises of riches and honour.

Numbers 22:20-22

*God came to Balaam at night, and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, get up and go with them, but the word that I will say to you, that you must do you." So Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab. Then God's **anger** was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him."*

- Why was God angry with Balaam? While God allowed Balaam to go with the princes, it does not mean God is not grieved because that is not His will. Because it was what Balaam wanted, God respects Balaam's heart and inclination to follow the princes and allowed it even though it was not God's will.
- God does not force us to do His will. He respects our free will and gently prompts us to lead us to do His will. Hence when we choose to go our own way instead of His, He allows us to do so.

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- Balaam probably made the choice to follow the princes because he was swayed by the promise of honour and silver/gold/money. Jude 1:11 and 2 Peter 2:15, refer to the story of Balaam and the donkey as they talk about people going against the will of God because they love the wages (money) of unrighteousness and the gains obtained from their wrong doings.

Lesson #1:

Money or mammon may become our god when it gets in the way of God's call for us - when we perceive responding to God's call to ministry as a 'waste' of our education, life or think that we will not be able to survive because we will not have enough money to provide for our lives and support our families. God is our Provider and He never short-changes us as we serve Him.

Numbers 22:23-29

After Balaam had struck the donkey twice to make her turn back, *"Then the angel of the LORD went farther, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she crouched down under Balaam. Then Balaam was angry, and he beat his donkey with a staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?" And Balaam said to the donkey, "You have made me look stupid, I wish there were a sword in my hand, for I would kill you right now." (Numbers 20:26-29)*

- Even though it was unnatural for a donkey to speak, Balaam responded to it as if it was natural that his donkey would speak. In the same way, despite our perception or other people's perception of us and our abilities, God can use us to do His work.

Lesson #2:

Our God is a big God, and we should never diminish Him. If God can use a donkey to speak and do His work, God can use any one of us for His purposes. Even with all our weaknesses, when God uses us, it will look like it is just natural for us to be able to do what we do for Him.

CONCLUSION

God gives us free will to decide whether we want to follow His will which He will communicate clearly to us. Let us not be swayed by mammon when we hear God's call for us because He is our provider, and everything is under His control. Let us trust Him to meet our needs and believe that He can use us with all our weaknesses to do what He has called us to even in full time ministry.

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read Numbers 22:5-29 slowly.
 - a. Reflect on what God is saying to you through this passage.
 - b. What is your response?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 3a. Why is it important to follow God's will in our lives?
- 3b. Why is it often difficult to obey God's will even when God has spoken to you clearly about His will for your life?
- (i) Do you agree that the promise of money and honor often trips us in our desire to follow God's will?
 - (ii) What are some other factors that hinder you from obeying God fully?
 - (iii) What can help you to stay obedient to God's will?
- 4a. Do you believe that God can use you for any purpose He chooses just like the way He used the donkey?
- 4b. How will you respond if God were to call you to:
- (i) full time ministry?
 - (ii) serve in a ministry you do not think you have the talent or ability to serve in?
 - (iii) serve in a place where you do not feel comfortable to go to?
- 4c. What does your response tell you about your heart condition towards God?
- 4d. How can your group members encourage or help you to improve your heart condition towards God, in the following week(s) till your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies, Prayer and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your testimony on how God has used you for His purpose despite your weakness or lack of abilities.

OR

Give thanks to God for calling each of us to serve Him in different ministries according to His will.

6. With a prayer partner, bring all that have been shared in 3b, 4c and 4d to God, surrendering yourselves to the Holy Spirit for transformation. Spend some time seeking the Holy Spirit's revelation on areas in your life where you have followed your own will instead of God's, confess and repent as the Spirit leads.

Pray for your group and our church to build a close relationship with God so you may discern God's will and follow the Spirit's leading to obey. Commit to keeping each other accountable in this spiritual journey of responding to the call of faith.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

- 1) This is Amazing Grace – Phil Wickham <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPQKj2Zptr0>
- 2) 10000 Reasons – Matt Redman https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXDGE_IR10E
- 3) Jesus I Come – Awaken Generation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMS6xvfquL4>

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