**The Gift of Inadequacy**

300 years separate Exodus from Genesis.

Originally 70 of Jacob’s descendants entered Egypt

Covers about 431 years ( Jacob enters 1875 B.C.) ( Tabernacle built 1445 B.C.).

 At the time of the Exodus 600,000 men above the age of 20

Best guess is a Total 3 to 4 million Israelites left Egypt in the Exodus.

It took God one night to get Israel out of Egypt, but 40 years to get Egypt out of Israel.

Exodus 3:7-12

7. The Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings.

8. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.

9.Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.

### 10. Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.”

### 11. But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?”

### 12.And He said, “Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.”

“Who am I Lord…. Who am I Lord, to go and say this …Who am I Lord, to go and do that, who Am I? There are people who are smarter than I, more eloquent than I, more righteous than I….Who am I Lord that you should want me… Who Am I?” I don’t have to ask for a show of hands of morning to know that these are probably familiar thoughts, familiar questions for most of us… questions that are part of a conversation I'd bet that most of us have had with God at some point in our life, and if by chance you haven’t, well just be patient- YOU WILL. Because we we all struggle at times with feeling like we are completely inadequate for something that God is calling us to take on…. we get scared, and anxious, and we are confronted with feelings of inadequacy and insufficiency…. And if we're honest with ourselves, it can be sort of a tough thing to deal with .

 In our passage today, we see Moses himself dealing with that very problem. God has spoken to Moses from the midst of the burning bush, and He says to him “listen Moses, I’ve got something that I want you to do… My children are being abused and mistreated…and I've heard their cries and I've seen their pain…..and Moses, I want you to go and tell this man, Pharoah, that I want him to let my people go….and then I want YOU, Moses, to bring my people out of Egypt and lead them to a land that flows with milk and honey, a land that I promised to their forefathers" and how does Moses, this great hero of the Bible, this great man of faith, how does he respond to the God of the universe? You might expect him to come back with something like “Sir yes sir!”, “Aye Captain", “Your wish is my command Lord" or something like that right? ….but that’s not how Moses responds at all is it? Instead, we see in verse 11 of our passage that he responds by asking “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?”…..His response is one of reluctance and self-doubt, and if we follow this story on through chapter 4 we'd see that even after God promises Moses that He will be with him every step of the way, he continues to throw out reason after reason as to why it is that he just not the man for the job…. ”but they won’t believe me Lord”, ”but I’m a nobody Lord, they won’t listen to me”, “God, you know I’m not an eloquent man and my speech is slow, I won’t know what to say… they wont believe me…who am I Lord? WHO….AM….I?? " Now, I can tell you that, in preparing for this message….I read many a commentary, and I listened to many a sermon on this particular passage, and I suppose I could stand up here, and beat up on Moses like a lot of the folks whose words I read and sermons I listened to….I could spend the next 20 minutes talking about how wrong Moses was, and how he should've had more faith, and although I wouldn’t be wrong in saying those things, it would make me feel like a bit of a hypocrite. Because, let me tell you, I've been there and I'll probably go there again before I leave this world. I can think of quite a few times in my life when God has provoked my spirit, and moved me to do something, and instead of heeding the call of the Spirit, I've thrown out reason after reason for why I couldn’t do it just like Moses did…. trying to talk my way out of it. Besides, it’s not like Moses’ reaction is unique even among the great heroes of the Bible… when God called Isaiah to be a prophet, he responded with “but God I’m not worthy…I’m a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips ”; when Jeremiah was called, his response was “but God, I’m not worthy, I’m too young and inexperienced"….when god called Amos, he responded with “but God, I’m a cattle herder and a fig picker, I’m not a prophet”, and the Apostle Paul, though his writing is elegant and impressive, he had a reputation for being sort of awkward in person, and Paul in his epistles makes it clear that he thought of himself as unworthy to even be called an apostle of Christ because of the way that he had persecuted the Church.

Secular history too is full of people who felt unworthy and unqualified for the role that was thrust upon them….. George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr , Sir Winston Churchill… maybe they weren't called by God in the same way that Moses and the prophets were, but make no mistake – they were called by God to be leaders at very crucial points in history....and though they're often portrayed as being self-assured leaders who were full of boldness and confidence, if you're a bit of a dork like me and you take the time to sift through their personal letters and read their diaries, you will find that they were often racked with anxieties and self-doubt… they were always questioning themselves… whether they were making the right decisions… whether they were really fit to lead. I point all of this out to show you that is really doesn’t matter who you are, where you’re from, how much experience you have or how educated you are, whether you're young or old, black or white, rich or poor….we all struggle with self-doubt and inadequacy at times, especially when it comes to the work of the Lord. And I want to tell you this morning, that the biggest reason that we feel unworthy and inadequate is because we ARE….we are unworthy, we are inadequate ….every single one of us…but you know what? That’s okay….We can be unworthy because we have a Saviour who cloaks us in His righteousness and makes us worthy. We can be inadequate because we serve a God who is MORE than willing and MORE than able to equip us with whatever is needed to make us adequate for the work He calls us to. We serve a God who meets us right where we are….sometimes I think we can fall into the trap of thinking that in order to be useful to God we need to have a certain set of skills, and we need to have an intricate understanding of Christian theology, or that we've gotta have our lives in perfect order…..but I want you to know that sort of thinking is straight from the devil himself ….the only thing that God requires to make use of us is our willingness to serve…. I promise you, he can take care of everything else. The specific skills, the biblical and doctrinal knowledge…obviously those are helpful things to have, and they come with time….but none of those things are required in order for God to use you. It’s the willingness to work, the willingness to serve that's the key, and that is where Moses went wrong….it wasn’t that he felt inadequate, or had doubts about himself, it was that he told God to send someone else... I want to point out that throughout the rest of Exodus 3 on through to Exodus 4:13 Moses continues to express doubt in himself and his own abilities, and its important to notice that, all during that conversation, God is patient and encouraging toward Moses ….. it’s not until Exodus 4:13 when Moses says " O my LORD, send, I pray you, by the hand of him whom you will send.” Or in other words he says “God please, send somebody else”, it’s not until then that God became angry with him….because that’s when Moses took it from “God, I'm not really sure that I can do this" to “God I don’t really want to do this"….. that’s when Moses went from expressing doubt about his own ability, to expressing an unwillingness to serve. 2 Corinthians 8:12 says that “if we have a willing mind, whatever we give, whatever we do, is accepted by God according to what we have, not according to that which we don’t have”. In other words, God measures us by our willingness to give and serve with the gifts that He has given us….not by our lack of the gifts that He doesn’t give us and He certainly doesn’t measure us by the gifts that He has given someone else. It’s not about what you know or don’t know, or how good your voice is, or how strong your back is, how much of the Bible you can quote, or how big your bank account is…..it’s about your willingness to work. Jesus, as He was preaching in the Galilean countryside, He looked around at the multitudes of lost, helpless people, and He talked about “the harvest being truly plentious, and the labourers being so few"….those words are still just as true today as they were when they were spoken, probably more so. God is just looking for willing labourers, whether they be skilled or unskilled…as long as you're willing to get in there and get your hands dirty…God can and will put you to work.

Now, circling back to the topic of inadequacy….. as I said before, I think it’s completely normal for us to feel, at times, like we just aren’t good enough, like we don’t measure up to the task before us….you could even go so far as to say that to feel inadequate is to be human. But, in the eyes of the world, those sorts of feelings are looked at almost like they’re some kind of illness…like something that you need to be cured from. The world is slap full of authors, teachers, therapists, motivational speakers, and sadly, even preachers who will tell you that you are perfect just like you are, they’ll talk about how you should be PROUD of who you are…how you need to follow your heart, and live your truth….whatever that even means. But, believe me when I say that those folks are doing you no favors….Proverbs 28:25-26 says “The proud man stirs up conflict ,but the man that trusts in the Lord will prosper… He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered”

See….the world is all about being self-assured and self-confident, but I want to tell you this morning that self-assuredness is highly over-rated…self-confidence is highly over-rated….and the very fact that the world puts so much effort into espousing the virtue of those things… well, that should be your first clue that there’s something seriously wrong with that way of thinking. In Romans 12, Paul wrote that we should “be not conformed to this world, but that we should be transformed by the renewing of our mind so that we are able to determine what is proper and pleasing to God”….***transformed by the renewing of our MIND***! Did you catch that?? In other words, Paul is saying that, when we come to know Christ, we ought not continue to think the way that the world thinks, we ought not continue to see things like the world sees them. Instead, we should start to view life from a different perspective… and we should begin to measure ourselves by a different measure… and once that transformation of perspective takes place, we become able to discern God’s will for us. Once we come to know Christ, we should stop thinking of how we can bring glory to our own name, and we start thinking of how we might bring glory to God’s….. we should stop measuring ourselves by to ourselves, and by other people, and start measuring ourselves by Jesus Christ…..and it’s when we start to compare ourselves to Christ that we begin to see just how inadequate and unworthy we truly are, but at the same time we also begin to see that, as inadequate and unworthy as we might be, we are no more inadequate and unworthy than anyone else. It’s when we start using Christ as our measuring stick that we begin to understand that, contrary to the wisdom of the world, that sense of inadequacy that we feel, it’s not an illness, it’s not a curse….it is a blessing in disguise. When we view our lives and the world from that transformed, Godly perspective that Paul talked about…. We come to understand that our feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy can be a powerful tool for growing our faith and deepening our relationship with God.

In fact, it is often our sense of inadequacy that drives us closer to God. In 2nd Chronicles, chapter 20, we are told about the reign of King Jehoshaphat, who was one of the more righteous and Godly kings of Judah…. and it was during the reign of Jehoshaphat, that the leaders of Moab, Ammon, and Edom got together and conspired to invade Judah. So they combined their soldiers into this massive allied force, and they launched a huge invasion… and within no time they had reached the village of Ein-Gedi, which lies on the western shore of the Dead Sea, and is only about 25 miles from Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat had his back against the wall; he knew that, if that army reached Jerusalem, it was game over… he was terrified because he knew there was nothing he could do, He knew there was just no way that Judah could possibly repel this massive attack, they just didn’t have the manpower. Like Jehoshaphat, we’ve all found ourselves in situations where we are faced with a task or a problem that seems insurmountable….and we either don’t know what to do, or we know what to do but we don’t have the ability to do it. In a situation like that, there are 2 ways that we can go; we can let our pride keep us from admitting our inadequacy, try to do it by our own strength, and doom ourselves to failure, or we can draw closer to God, give our burden to Him and trust Him to show us the way ….so what did Jehoshaphat do? The Bible tells us that he “set himself to seek the Lord"…. Jehoshaphat knew his army was inadequate, He knew that there was nothing HE could do, but there was something that GOD could do. So he got all of the people from all over Judah to gather together at the closest place to God that he could think of- the Temple …. and as Jehoshaphat stood in the midst of his people, he humbly bowed his head, and he began to pray….he prayed to God like he had never prayed before. See, Jehoshaphat knew that God, and only God, could deliver Judah….He trusted that God could deliver them, so he asked God to deliver them….. and the Bible says that the Spirit of God came upon a Levite named Jahaziel, and through him God told the people “you don’t have to be scared of this great army that threatens you…. You don’t have to worry about fighting this battle, because I’m gonna fight it for you”. Then God instructs them to march out to the place where they can see the allied army and to watch so they can the salvation of God with their own eyes….and the next morning, as the people of Judah watch on, God sends a cloud of confusion and chaos down on that massive army, and amidst the confusion the soldiers began turn against themselves and slay each other….and within a few hours that army had been completely wiped out….without the soldiers of Judah ever needing to raise even one sword. Like Jehoshaphat, when we are faced with something that is beyond our abilities, and we don’t know what to do…the thing to do is to set ourselves to seek God … set ourselves to seek Him through prayer and through His Word… If we trust in Him with all our heart, and seek His wisdom instead of our own, He will guide our path. We may, at times, be inadequate…we may, at times, feel like we aren't enough….But God is always enough, He’s more than enough…even when we aren't. When everything else in this world let’s us down- we must remember that God is always there, and He is everything that we could possibly need….all we have to do is seek His face and trust Him to show us the way.

Not only, does our own sense of inadequacy have the potential to bring us closer to God, but it also gives us an opportunity to see first hand the amazing things that God can do with so little… as Jesus was going to and fro throughout the countryside, preaching to the lost and healing the sick, He began to be followed about by a great multitude of people, and John’s Gospel tells us that on one particular day, there had gathered a crowd of more than 5000 people there on the plain at the foot of a mountain, listening to Jesus preach and watching Him heal the sick…. and as the day drew on, Jesus knew that the crowd was growing hungry, and He sensed an opportunity to teach His disciples a lesson about the abundance of God, and Jesus was never one for passing up a teaching moment. There happened to be a boy there who had 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish, and Jesus took that bread and fish from the boy and He blessed them….and then He gave it to his disciples to distribute amongst the crowd…. BEFORE long that entire crowd of 5000 people had been fed with just those 5 little loaves and 2 fish….and John tells us that, after everybody had eaten their fill, Jesus instructed the disciples go around and collect all of the scraps of bread that was left over so that none was wasted...and they ended up collecting 12 whole baskets full….see, Jesus took what was inadequate in the eyes of the disciples, and He made it adequate…He made it MORE than adequate, He turned it into more than the disciples could’ve ever imagined…and it works the same with us. God doesn’t need very much at all from us in order to into accomplish amazing things. Whatever miniscule ability we might have, if we offer it to God willingly….He will take it and rejoice over it, and He will multiply it beyond our wildest dreams…. He will use it to accomplish unbelievable things.

Before I move on, I want to point out here too that Jesus could've made it so that there was exactly enough food to feed 5000 people, and not a single crumb left over…but that’s not what He did was it?? Instead He provided far more than they needed…..because there are no half-measures with God….When he blesses us, He doesn’t bless to sufficiency, He blesses to abundance….and I know when we start talking about blessings and abundance, our fallen mind has a tendency to start thinking about material things… food, money, houses, jobs, cars etc. and yes, God does sometimes bless in that way, but that’s not what I’m talking about here; I’m talking about spiritual things, …things like love, wisdom, patience, and mercy… these are our most precious blessings, the material things of life, they fade away…. but the spiritual things endure forever….and God doesn’t just give us enough of these things to get by, He showers us with abundance…. And He does so with the expectation that we will be continually growing and branching out to share the blessings He has given us with other people… and just as Jesus instructed the disciples to gather ALL of the bread, so that none of it was lost, we are expected to be good stewards of the gifts and the talents that God has given us….we are expected to share them and see that they are not wasted.

One of the things that I've discovered about people is that we have this natural tendency to want accomplish things on our own, but God never intended for us to try and accomplish His work alone, I think that’s why sometimes He puts things in front of us that remind us of how weak and inadequate we truly are…. It forces us to depend on the Holy Spirit. Jesus left His disciples, and us, with the Great Commission to “Go and teach all nations” but I think its important for us to remember that He also told them to wait in Jerusalem until they were “endued with power on high” before carrying that commission out. Jesus knew that despite all of the things He had shown them and taught them…. despite all the time He had spent with them, it wouldn’t be enough, they wouldn’t be enough…. they needed the Holy Spirit. The disciples knew God, they knew how to pray, and they knew scripture…but without the Spirit of God dwelling within them, to strengthen them and comfort them, it would be impossible for them to accomplish what God set before them to accomplish- and it’s the same for us today. As I stand here right now, I feel completely inadequate and unworthy to speak to you and I am inadequate and unworthy, but that’s ok….because the Spirit of God dwells in me, and the Power of God is perfected in my weakness. For most of my life you couldn’t have gotten me to stand up here and speak if you offered me a thousand bucks, that might sound like an exaggeration but I assure you it’s not. Like Moses, if I were asked.. I would’ve said “ Me, speak?? I cant do that…nobody will listen to me, I’m not a public speaker… Who am I to stand and speak.... Who am I?”. But, then God led me through some things in life…through some deep valleys, and in those valleys my eyes were opened to who He is and I finally figured out who I am…..and who I am is a child of God. I learned that it’s ok to be weak, it’s ok to be scared, it’s ok to feel inadequate and insufficient....for its in my weakness that I’m drawn closer to God…it’s in my weakness that I am made strong…it’s in my weakness that I am able to do things through the power of the Holy Spirit to bring glory to God’s name in a way that I never could on my own….

Life can be tough sometimes… sometimes we get to a point where we feel worn out and broken down….sometimes we are faced with things that we feel ill-equipped and unprepared to handle…. sometimes God moves us to take on things that make us feel uncomfortable. But, Jesus never said that life would be easy or comfortable, in fact He told us just the opposite…. He did, however, promise that we would be given what we need to endure, no matter what comes our way. He asked the Father to send down His Holy Spirit upon us so that our souls might be filled with living water…He bore our sorrows on that Cross so that we might experience joy…. He was crushed for our iniquities so that we might know peace…. He gave himself to be forsaken so that we might never have to feel unloved and alone…. He became sin for our sake and took upon himself the wrath of God so that we might be justified in the sight of God….and He endured the sting of death so that we never have to. YES we are inadequate, YES we are unworthy …but that’s ok, because such is the love of Christ that He did all these things and more, FOR US, so that our inadequacy might become a gift that draws us closer TO God rather than a being a curse that separates us FROM God.