

EPIC: Moses - "God Does the Extraordinary with the Ordinary"

When you woke up this morning, you may have thought about the day ahead and remembered that this was Sunday, and thought that it was probably going to be just another ordinary, hot July Sunday, like others before.

But if you will listen carefully today, I will show you how this ordinary Sunday can become extraordinary.

January 6th, 1850, was bitterly cold in Colchester, England, a blizzard kept most church attenders home. At a Methodist Chapel on Artillery Street only about a dozen folks showed up.

When it became apparent that even the pastor would not be attending, an ordinary, unschooled church member man rose and spoke on...

Isaiah 45:22, *"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."*

Then, after a brief devotional on the text, of what seemed less than ordinary, folks went home thinking the day's service was a bit of a loss. What they didn't realize was that a fifteen-year-old boy had ducked into the room to escape the snowstorm, and, hearing the message, had given his heart to the Lord.

Years later that boy, Charles Spurgeon, wrote this: *"Don't hold back because you cannot preach in St. Paul's; be content to talk to one or two in a cottage. You may cook in small pots as well as in big ones. Little pigeons can carry great messages. Even a little dog can bark at a thief, wake up the master, and save the house.... Do what you do right thoroughly, pray over it heartily, and leave the result to God."*

Yes, God uses the ordinary and even the unexpected. We don't always understand it, and though we might agree that we're all just ordinary people living out ordinary days in the course of an ordinary life, we hesitate to accept the idea that God could use the ordinary in extraordinary ways.

We don't imagine it possible that anything extraordinary could happen in a blizzard, or that anything said by an amateur could have lasting impact, or that you might be another Charles Spurgeon or Billy Graham.

But God has always used ordinary things to reveal His extraordinary Glory and the glory of His Kingdom cause.

Most people are surprised by this strategy; God using the ordinary to do the extraordinary. We are especially surprised, when it involves imperfect people like us. We all feel so insufficient and uncomfortable.

But that is how God has always worked; He uses the ordinary to do extraordinary things in this world!

This morning, using events from the life of Moses I want to show you some of the ways God does the extraordinary using the ordinary.

After reading through the extraordinary story of an ordinary Hebrew boy's birth and salvation from certain death, his growing up in Pharaoh's court and his decision to save his people at his own prestigious expense; Moses runs away into the wilderness of Midian to start another life, not to be seen again by his people for 40 years. That is where today's story begins...

Exodus 3:1-4, 7-8 says, "Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."... **7** The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey."

While Moses was tending Jethro's sheep on the mountain, he saw an unusual sight. He saw an ordinary bush burning yet was not consumed by the fire! From that bush, God spoke to Moses and revealed His plan for him and for the Hebrew people.

Isn't it interesting to note that the Bible does not tell us what kind of bush it was? It could have been a beautiful bush, or an ugly one, or a tall bush, or a short one—but that wasn't important.

What made this ordinary bush extraordinary was the fact that it was used by God for a specific purpose.

And that is what I want you to see here first. **God does the extraordinary...**

1. WITH ORDINARY THINGS

God used an ordinary bush doing an extraordinary thing to get Moses' attention!

“So Moses thought, ‘I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.’ When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush...”

It's the wow, principle! How would you like to have been there to see that? If it happened on a day like today, I might have kept my distance, extraordinary or not. If God wanted to wow me on a day like this, I might be drawn to an icicle or maybe a **Klondike Bar! WOW!**

Anyway, that isn't the only ordinary thing God used to do the extraordinary!

In **Exodus 3:16-17** God calls Moses to serve Him, *“Now go and call together all the elders of Israel. Tell them, ‘Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—has appeared to me. He told me, ‘I have been watching closely, and I see how the Egyptians are treating you. I have promised to rescue you from your oppression in Egypt. I will lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.’”*

Moses didn't feel up to that calling and so in **Exodus 4:1-5** Moses' response,

*“But Moses protested again, ‘What if they won't believe me or listen to me? What if they say, ‘The Lord never appeared to you?’” Then the Lord asked him, “**What is that in your hand?**” “**A shepherd's staff,**” Moses replied. “Throw it down on the ground,” the Lord told him. So Moses threw down the staff, and it turned into a snake! Moses jumped back. Then the Lord told him, “Reach out and grab its tail.” So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it turned back into a shepherd's staff in his hand. “Perform this sign,” the Lord told him. “Then they will believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—really has appeared to you.”*

It was an ordinary shepherd's staff Moses carried in his hand while tending the sheep of his father-in-law Jethro.

When we see this rod first mentioned it is referred to as the “**rod of Moses.**”

But when God used that ordinary rod in the hands of Moses, that rod is then referred to as “**the rod of God.**”

An ordinary rod used by God to meet the needs of the people of Israel. Consider the **ten plagues in Egypt**, and remember that **five of the ten** occurred when Moses *lifted that walking stick into the air*.

Remember when the Israelites were fleeing from Pharaoh and were trapped by the **Red Sea**? It was the **rod of God** which Moses lifted to **part the waters** so the people could cross.

It was **the rod of God** which Moses held in his hand when he **struck the rock** in the desert so that **water came gushing forth**.

It was an ordinary rod, made of **wood**, fashioned for a specific purpose. It **didn't have any jewels** on it. There was **no elaborate ornamentation** on it. It was **never owned by a king or queen**. But God used this ordinary rod to meet the needs of His people in their exodus from Egypt.

In the New Testament, it was a **boy** who gave the Lord **five ordinary loaves of bread and two ordinary fish** to feed the **five thousand** men. With this ordinary food, Jesus met the needs of the people gathered to hear Him teach.

The **wood** used to fashion the **cross on which Christ died** was a common Roman cross, but **after it was used by God**, it became known as **the cross of Christ**.

So, God does the extraordinary using ordinary things.
Not only that, but God does the extraordinary...

2. WITH ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Think back to the plagues in Egypt. Out of the ten plagues, nine were ordinary things which God transformed in order to set His people free.

There were no shooting stars, no UFO's, and no fireworks. God used ordinary plagues to speak to Pharaoh about setting His people free.

The water was ordinary. The frogs were ordinary. The gnats and flies were ordinary. The death of the cattle was likely by an ordinary disease. The boils and sores were ordinary.

All of these things were ordinary things that created an extraordinary encounter of God with a hardened heart Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

Matter of fact, even some of the circumstances that these ordinary things created seemed ordinary enough to explain away by Pharaoh and his magicians; like a staff becoming a snake or river becoming red as blood, or the multiplication of frogs.

They replicated those circumstances in order to deny God's hand in the matter. **Today**, skeptics reason away the ten plagues too using ordinary explanations.

Yes, at first glance each of these circumstances seemed ordinary until you looked a bit the closer.

The water becoming blood happened not only in rivers and streams and lakes and but even in basins and water pots.

The multitude of frogs and gnats and flies one after the other only infested Egyptian homes.

The death of all types of livestock at the same time (horses, and donkeys and camels and cattle and sheep and goats), also was selective – only the Egyptians livestock.

Numerous boils and sores appeared all over the body, only the Egyptians got them.

Hey, as ordinary as these circumstances might have been by themselves, the timing and selectiveness was extraordinary, and it caught the attention of some of the Egyptians.

So, when Moses declared the hailstorm plague, some Egyptians responded!

Exodus 9:18-21, *“Therefore, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now. Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every person and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die.”* Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the Lord hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside. But those who ignored the word of the Lord left their slaves and livestock in the field.”

All of these things were ordinary things that created an extraordinary encounter of God with a hardened heart Pharaoh and the Egyptians. **God took the ordinary and made it inexplicable.**

God does the extraordinary with ordinary things and ordinary circumstances. And lastly, God does the extraordinary...

3. WITH ORDINARY PEOPLE

The Hebrew people had been enslaved in Egypt for many, many years. God heard their groanings and decided to do something about it.

So, what kind of a person does God choose to use to deliver His people?

Moses, like King David, was just a simple shepherd, a hired hand who had difficulty putting his thoughts together into sensible sentences.

He had fled into the desert, because he had murdered an Egyptian. **Moses was less than ordinary, really.**

D. L. Moody once said, *“Moses spent 40 years thinking he was somebody, 40 years learning he was nobody, and 40 years discovering what God can do with a nobody.”*

This ordinary man was used by God in a mighty way, so that when Moses came down from his **meeting with God** on the mountain, he had to cover his face with a veil because the **glory of God shone** so brightly.

This ordinary man was used by God so effectively that **when he died**, the entire Hebrew **nation mourned** his death for **thirty days**.

And this ordinary man was **present with Christ** on the Mount of **Transfiguration** in the New Testament.

God used this ordinary man to provide an example to His people of how the Lord can use the most ordinary people to accomplish His purposes.

God does extraordinary things with ordinary people.

Paul makes this incredible standard of God clear in **1 Corinthians 1:26-31**, *“Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28*

God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

He **used Moses** who was shy, fearful, and afraid to speak to lead a million people out from slavery.

He used **David**. The youngest son, a simple shepherd to become a giant killer and greatest king of Israel.

Jesus used **twelve ordinary men** to reveal God’s plan of salvation to the world. The disciples were not well-educated, or rich, or powerful, or famous, but they were used by God to transform the world.

Are you letting God use you as a good example to your children, to your spouse, to your friends and neighbors, to your coworkers, and to your church?

He isn’t looking for extraordinary people to change the world; He is looking for men and women, boys and girls to let Him do His work through them.

IN CLOSING:

The Cross of Christ wasn’t made of gold or silver, nor was it encrusted with jewels. It was made of ordinary wood and was a common method of execution. But God used it to transform the world.

No matter how ordinary you think you are, no matter how ordinary you think this church is, no matter how ordinary you think I am, we can all be used by God to help set free people. God delights in using the ordinary to do the extraordinary.

In fact, He deliberately chooses what the world considers nonsense to accomplish His sovereign plans.

What about you? Are you an ordinary young person? Are you an ordinary husband or wife, parent or child? Are you an ordinary senior adult? Are you an ordinary, soft-spoken Christian who loves Jesus but who finds it hard to express your faith? Are you ordinary?

Good! God will use you, if you are available for His use.

By now, you've heard the word "ordinary" so many times in this message that you may have grown tired of hearing it.

Listen, God can use even this "**ordinary**" message. I hope that every time you see, hear or speak that word that you'll remember the word extraordinary!

Because that what God desires to do when He uses ordinary things and circumstances and people, just like you and me.

Your name may not be Noah, or Abraham or Moses. It may be Jim, or Sally, or Billy, or Carol, or Christine, or Joe. But whatever your name - there is still something—a great something—an extraordinary something God has for ordinary you—and me—to do.

The key to it all is **our willingness to be used by God**. **Don't delay it another day. Make your commitment to Christ today.**

This ordinary Sunday can become extraordinary as you yield yourself to God so that through you and I, every – one might know His Name and hear His glorious message every-where on earth.

Will you make your fresh dedication known to your fellow Christians? If you have never given yourself to God, won't you do it today?

LET'S PRAY