

So, I think by now you all know that sometimes my brain can be a weird place, making the strangest connections between things that at times I don't even know where they came from. This happened to me this week as I was trying to figure out how I wanted to dive into the situation going on with poor Moses in our first lesson this morning. Out of nowhere, the voice of Robin Williams hit my head. All I could hear was, of all things, one random scene from Aladdin, which just happens to be one of my favorite scenes, from one of my top five Disney movies.

Aladdin and Abu find themselves trapped inside the Cave of Wonders and they have just discovered Genie's lamp, rubbed it, and found themselves face to face with his giant, blue self. Well, Aladdin being the trickster that he is is trying to figure out how exactly to get out of the cave while also maintaining his three wishes. So, he cops a bit of a doubtful attitude declaring that there is no way that he believes that Genie is powerful enough to get them out of the cave. He acts all indignant and walks away simply saying that they're going to have to find their own way out even if that seems impossible. This triggers an absolute tirade from Genie. He literally puts his foot down and declares, "Excuse me, are you lookin' at me? Did you rub my lamp? Did you wake me up? Did you bring me here? And all

of the sudden you're walkin' out on me, I don't think so! Not right now!
You're getting' your wishes, so sit down!!”

Genie is completely beside himself that Aladdin would even remotely *hint* that he did not have the situation entirely under control and so his frustration comes bursting out in an absolute fit of righteous indignation. And of course this means that Aladdin got exactly what he wanted, right? To prove his phenomenal cosmic powers are legit, Genie zooms them out of the Cave and then when confronted with Aladdin who demands his three wishes, Genie can't believe he's been outsmarted. There was no actual wish, Genie acted of his own accord, too caught up in his angst to realize what was happening around him.

I'll wholly own, what I'm working with here is a total stretch, but like I said, I couldn't get this scene out of my head, just the way that Genie rants and raves like he cannot believe the situation that he is in, and frankly, well, that's entirely Moses in our first lesson this morning. He is completely and totally baffled that this is where he is, that this is what he's dealing with, and frankly he is just absolutely appalled that God is the one that has put him in this position, which cues one of my favorite rants in all the Bible.

However, before we get to the rant, let's set up some context here. We are deep in the heart of the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites. We

have gone through their first dose of hungry whining and God has responded by providing them with manna and quail, food literally rained down from heaven. However, these are people we're dealing with and people are never satisfied and so...the people want meat. They're basically jonesing for a hamburger and to add insult to craving, they happen to find themselves within a stones throw of Egypt...*again*. Yes, they have been wandering so long that they have made a legit loop around the Sinai peninsula and find themselves back where they started, right across the river from Egypt, what now looks to them like the land of plenty.

Suddenly, all those years of back breaking labor and oppression seem like a cake walk in comparison to their current existence and better yet, there is *food* in Egypt, like legit food. Melons and onion and cucumbers and fish and their mouths are watering and the manna looks like cardboard and they just tell Moses they want nothing to do with what they have going on at the moment, because sure slavery was awful but at least we were *full*. And frankly, the whole thing just makes you want to roll your eyes, because my goodness people, let's have some perspective!!! And honestly, that's about Moses' reaction too, he walks by all these people sitting outside of their tents lamenting and he is just like I AM DONE!!! Like Genie, he stomps his foot and heads to take things up with God, only to find that God too is

annoyed with the people and oh boy does that not sit well with Moses. Our text says that Moses was displeased and you think it's with the people but oh no, Moses is displeased *with God*, and cue rant!

Why have you treated your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? (And here's where the Genie comparison comes in) Did I conceive all this people? Did I give birth to them, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a sucking child,' to the land that you promised on oath to their ancestors? Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they come weeping to me and say, 'Give us meat to eat!' I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me. If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once—if I have found favor in your sight—and do not let me see my misery.

He's exhausted. He has reached the absolute end of what he can handle and he just can't take it anymore. These aren't his people! He didn't give birth to them, why are they his responsibility? The burden is too heavy and Moses has grown weak, weak with the whining, weak with the walking, weak with the wandering, weak with the wondering. He's done. He is absolutely and completely done and he needs God to know that.

So how does God respond? With calm and practicality. The solution this time isn't more food, more manna from heaven. The solution is more people to share the burden of leadership, because Moses is right, this has become too much for one man. He needs support. He needs others to bounce ideas off of. He needs others to help shoulder the needs of so many, so that he doesn't feel so alone, so he doesn't feel like he has to solve all the

problems by himself, so he doesn't have to be annoyed by himself. In the midst of trying to help the Israelites become a community, one thing becomes readily apparent, Moses too needs a community of his own, otherwise, he's going to burn out and give up and just keep yelling at God until he can't take it anymore.

So, what exactly is the takeaway here? Scream at God and get an answer? I mean...maybe. I'm a strong advocate for letting God have it every once in awhile because frankly I think it's good for the soul, but no...I think the point is about more than Moses, I think the point is about all of us. I think at it's heart, this is about the need for community. The only way Moses was going to be able to live into this calling that God had given him, the only way he was going to be able to keep loving these people and caring for them was if he felt like he wasn't doing it alone, if he didn't feel like he was screaming into the wind, constantly fighting the battle by himself.

Let's face it...life is hard. Like legit. There's no way around it, and we can point to all the good things that happen around us, but it doesn't stop the fundamental truth that some days, we just feel like the Genie, we just feel like Moses, at our complete wits end because *how do we keep doing this day after day after day?!* How do we deal with the hard and the whining and the wandering and the wilderness and the hunger and the awful? How

do we deal with *life*? That's essentially what Moses is asking God. How does he keep doing this when it just keeps feeling so awful?

God's answer is essentially that Moses can't keep doing this, not like this. Not by himself. He can't. He shouldn't. And so God tells him to surround himself with seventy others who will also be imbued with the Spirit to help diffuse some of the responsibility, to take on some of the burden, to try and make things not necessarily less hard, but easier to bear. When the world gets tough, when people start whining again, when the rabble rumble up the crowd, Moses will now have people to turn to who will share his angst, his fears, his worry, his joy. Moses has his people now, so he can keep caring for God's people.

Somehow, we have created a world, even a church, in which we feel as though we have to go it alone, figure things out by ourselves, deal with things on our own, be independent thinkers who don't need others to survive. But the fundamental truth is...we need each other. We need community. We need people to help shoulder the burden because life is too heavy to bear alone. We need partners to walk this road of life and faith with us so that we don't get lost, so that we have someone to find us, so that we have someone there to listen when we say, ya know what?! This is terrible! We don't have to go alone. We don't have to deal with the weight

of the world alone. We shouldn't. We should go together, for always, because it will make us better, it will make the world better.

More than anything, I dare to say that's why we need the church. We can all do faith on our own, we can all pray alone, we can read the Bible alone, but...shouldering burdens, carrying hardships, struggling to bring good into the world? That is so much better with others by our sides, fighting for the same reasons, praying for the same things, holding us when we can't hold ourselves. You are here today because deep down there is a recognition that you need a community of faith to surround you, in the good and in the bad, because without each other everything just feels a bit worthy of a rant like no other.

While I was writing this sermon, one of my sisters was going through a rough day, feeling the weight of the world acutely, and wanting to go full Moses. At one point she declared, everything is pointless. And it was really hard to not just sink into that feeling and be like, yeah, ya know what? It is. But then, I thought of this text, of the point of this sermon, and I simply said, no...we are not pointless...we have each other. It didn't fix the hard, the ick of the world, but it made it easier to bear. And maybe that's all we need for today, for this moment, for this stretch of hard...each other. Community. Trust that if we are in this together...we can survive the wilderness. **AMEN**