

**Columbia, Missouri**  
**The Worship of God • August 29, 2021**



**The Scripture**  
**Exodus 4:10-18 (*The Message*)**

Moses raised another objection to GOD: “Master, please, I don’t talk well. I’ve never been good with words, neither before nor after you spoke to me. I stutter and stammer.”

GOD said, “And who do you think made the human mouth? And who makes some mute, some deaf, some sighted, some blind? Isn’t it I, GOD? So, get going. I’ll be right there with you—with your mouth! I’ll be right there to teach you what to say.”

He said, “Oh, Master, please! Send somebody else!”

GOD got angry with Moses: “Don’t you have a brother, Aaron the Levite? He’s good with words, I know he is. He speaks very well. In fact, at this very moment he’s on his way to meet you. When he sees you he’s going to be glad. You’ll speak to him and tell him what to say. I’ll be right there with you as you speak and with him as he speaks, teaching you step by step. He will speak to the people for you. He’ll act as your mouth, but you’ll decide what comes out of it. Now take this staff in your hand; you’ll use it to do the signs.”

Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said, “I need to return to my relatives who are in Egypt. I want to see if they’re still alive.”

Jethro said, “Go. And peace be with you.”

**The Message**  
**“Courageous: Rumbling with Vulnerability”**  
**Mark Briley**

How many of you did something courageous this week? It’s not intended to be a trick question or anything. I’ve just been thinking a lot about courage getting ready for this new message series. Were you courageous?

I saw pictures of students going back to school – some photos taken by a parent while their young student was walking away from them – backpack bouncing with each step and, honestly, about the same size as the student carrying the bag. That’s courageous. “*Do you mean the student or the parent, pastor?*” The answer is “Yes.”

I saw a runner running up one of the long hills on Scott Boulevard when it was 137 degrees outside – courageous? Yes. I saw a tired, healthcare worker in scrubs leaving their shift with that weary look of, “*Can I go back and do this again tomorrow?*” Courageous.

I saw a family entrust their loved one into the eternal hands of God; a three-and-a-half-year-old member of the family offered Joshua 1:9 to encourage the family. What does that text say? “*Be strong and courageous.*” Indeed.

I heard someone share at a backyard gathering full of people exploring what Church looks like at Broadway say, “*I’ve been hurt so much by the Church. I’m not sure I have the energy to try again.*” Honest. Vulnerable. Courageous.

I saw a desperate parent at the airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, raise their infant over the barbed-wired fence to one of our military personnel in hopes their child can be spared the tragedy of what’s happening there right now. Heartbreaking. Gut wrenching. Courageous.

Dr. Brene Brown is a University of Houston professor and researcher, who specializes in the study of shame, vulnerability, and courage. We’ve built this *Courageous* series on her research.<sup>1</sup> She exploded on the scene when her “Ted Talk” on *Vulnerability* was released in 2014 and is now rated as the number one “Ted Talk” of all-time based on a combination of Google searches, YouTube hits, and official Ted Talk views which alone are almost 68-million views.

Her approachable writing style and personality have drawn millions to consider what it means to be vulnerable. Her current motto is “*Courage over comfort,*” and that phrase

---

<sup>1</sup> *Dare to Lead*. Brene Brown. Penguin Random House. 2018. This series is based on the four pillars of courage as defined in this book.

alone may be enough for you to consider today when it comes to thinking about how you're living these days. "*Courage*," she says, "*is showing up when you can't predict or control the outcome.*"

We like control. Most of the time, we want to know how everything is going to go before it actually, well, goes. As long as I can control whatever is happening in front of me, I have no need to grow through any discomfort. If I'm in *control*, I don't need *courage*. Ah... but what kind of control do we really have?

My kids have launched into a new school year this week like many of the kids in your life. They're all playing sports or involved in extracurricular activities. Competition can get a person worked up as they anticipate, navigate, and manage all the scenarios – *who's doing what, what if this happens, what if I make a mistake?* I tell my kids, "*You control three things: your preparation; your attitude; and your effort.*" That's it. You get those three things aligned and then let courage carry you into the moment.

We're so often worried about perceptions; the people and things we can't control; the critics. How often do you pull back in fear of what being the real you, being authentic in the moment, might cost you? My buddy said this week, "*Courage has a cost. Complacency is much cheaper.*" It's true. Complacency is safer, too; easier; comfortable. But where does that get any of us? It leaves us in the stands.

Fifteen years to the day before my grandfather was born and 98 years to the day before my son, Dane, was born, former president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, spoke of '*daring greatly*' in a speech he gave in Paris about what makes for a strong citizen. He firmly believed that one learned by doing; that it is better to stumble than do nothing or to sit by and criticize those "*in the arena.*" "*It's not the critic who counts,*" he said, "*not the one who points out how the strong person stumbles. The credit belongs to the one who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes up short again and again but who does strive to do the deeds... If he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly.*"

It's a powerful word and has inspired courage for more than a century now. World leaders have used it to inspire. Athletes have used it to motivate their teammates before big games. Cadillac used it to sell cars. Electric violinist phenom, Lindsey Stirling, wrote a song called "*The Arena*" inspired by the speech. LeBron James has *#ManInTheArena* written on his shoes. Incoming freshmen at the United States Naval Academy are required to memorize the whole speech. And... it inspired Brene and her research and now here we are as people of faith at Broadway, wondering about a courageous faith.

As we find our way forward as individuals, the church, and our community, collective courage will be needed to brave an unknown future with strength and purpose. As a precursor to the big *Priority Action Plan* reveal of Broadway's visioning process – unanimously affirmed by our board this past week – we consider Dr. Brown's four pillars of courage.

Today? Rumbling with Vulnerability. What does that mean? Let's start with vulnerability. Vulnerability is the emotion we experience during times of uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure. Few of us immediately get excited about expressing such emotion. But we've been there. Of thousands asked to describe vulnerability, here were some shared in Brown's research: *"the first date after my divorce, talking about race with my team, trying to get pregnant after my second miscarriage, starting my own business, watching my child leave for college, apologizing to a colleague about how I spoke to him in a meeting, sending my son to orchestra practice knowing how badly he wants to make first chair and knowing there's a really good chance he will not make the orchestra at all, waiting for the doctor to call back, giving feedback, getting feedback, getting fired, firing someone."*

Maybe some of these ring true of your experience with vulnerability. Across all of the data, there's not a shred of empirical evidence that vulnerability is weakness. It's hard. It's uncertain. But it's courageous. And the rumbling? Well... it is simply a discussion, conversation, or meeting defined by a commitment to lean into that vulnerability. So... let's get ready to rumble!!!

We turn to Moses – First Testament hero – who was not one particularly drawn to the arena. He was really just trying to mind his own business. He'd had a rough go in his life. Born a Hebrew but for his own survival, released down the river in a basket, pulled out of the water and raised by an Egyptian woman. His very name, Moses, means *"Pulled Out"*. Tough identity stuff, you know? *Where do I belong?* Moses gets in some trouble and decides to skip town. Hits Midian and defending the honor of some women harassed by some Shepherds at the watering hole there, gets invited back to the women's farm where he ultimately gets married and works the family farm with them – out of the spotlight, out of the arena, doing his own thing for a long while.

One day, Moses or *"Pully"* as his bros had nicknamed him, was out on the back forty, sucking down a Big Gulp and watching his fathers-in-law flock as he did day-in-and-day-out when the famous burning bush enters the story. If you know nothing of Moses, you still likely have heard about the Burning Bush. I always picture the bush like the Singing Bush in *The Three Amigos* but that's probably not historically accurate. But here's where the rumbling with vulnerability begins. The Bush is on fire. That'll catch your attention. And then it speaks: *"Pully. Moses."* Moses gives the side-eye to the sheep, takes that final slurp of his Big Gulp and then is like, *"Uh, yeah?"* It's God. And

God has a big ask of Moses. The Israelites are being persecuted by the Egyptian Pharaoh and God knows Moses has some feels about all of that even though he's been hiding out in Midian all these years.

God says, *"Time to get in the arena, Mo. I need you."* Moses has every excuse not to show up. *"Nah, I'm good. I'm a bit out of shape. I'm tired of the games they were playing. My reputation back there ain't that good anyway."* You and I process through these same excuses. *"Man, I'm tired. I'm done with all that stuff. I don't want to lead and not sure I'd be all that effective anyway."* And at the same time, we're the greatest critics of those in the arena trying to get something done. But Moses still resists. *"I don't have any nunchuck skills. I have no computer hacking skills. People only want to follow people who have skills."* But God addresses every excuse. *"I got you, Moses... and here's how."* And a final plea: *"God. I can't talk good."* And once again, God says, *"You've got this. I'll be with you. And don't you have a brother? What's his name? Aaron?"* *"It's Aaron!"* *"We'll pull in your brother Aaron. He got a solid B+ in Debate class in High School. No more pretending. No more excuses. Let's get in there and make a difference in the lives of some people who are really hurting right now."* Moses had every excuse not to show up – to stay clear of the challenging arena God was calling him into. In the end? Moses showed up. Where would the world be if he didn't? What excuses do we need to shed so we can show up in the arena God is calling us, too, now?

Maybe this comes as we rumble vulnerability. I've heard so many people say to me in the last year, *"I'm done with game playing. I'm done with the division and all the buzzwords about this side and that side. Can't we just be real?"* And we can get caught up in this. What will people think about me? Will they judge me? I think I'll just slide back, slide down, slide out. When you're in the arena, you need to get vulnerable with some trusted confidants. Millions of people are sitting in the cheap seats ready to tell you why you'll fail; why your plan won't work; while you should give up before you start.

Dr. Brown says you need a Square Squad. What's that? You get a 1"x1" piece of paper and write down the names of the people whose opinions of you matter most. It needs to be small because it forces you to edit. Put it in your wallet or somewhere close to you – take ten minutes to share a little gratitude with your squad and tell them that you're getting clear about the Arena you're about to step into.

Then? Trust them enough to be vulnerable about what it will take. These aren't just your "yes" people. These are rumble partners you respect who will be clear with you and you'll risk being clear as well. Moses goes back to his Square Squad – his pop-in-law, Jethro, among them and he says, *"Bush. Fire. Talking."* They hash it out. *"Here's the arena God is calling me into, Pops. I'm anxious about it. I'm not really skilled for it. It's risky. I think I've got to go but I sure could use a few more green lights."*

And Jethro soaks it all in and he says, “*Go. And may peace go with you.*” What are you waiting for to act on that hope that you hold? That idea you have? That way you want to grow? The difference you want to make? There’s a time for waiting and there’s a time when God says, “*You’ve got all the green lights you need.*”

Bob Goff was flying back home to California, tired after a long day speaking at an event just over the mountains from his place. A little plane. Flying solo. A short flight and basically uneventful until... he neared the airport in his hometown. Bob went through the landing procedures and checklists. One of the last steps was pulling the lever to lower the landing gear. “*There are green lights on the control panel to let the pilot know each wheel is completely down, locked, and ready to hit the runway. When you see the green lights on the panel, you’re ready to land.*” Bob pulls the lever, hears the wheels rotating into position but then? Just two green lights – one for each of the back two wheels. No green light for the nose gear! “*I wasn’t tired anymore,*” he said.

Trying to play it cool, he calls the control tower: “*Tower, I don’t think I have a nose wheel.*” “*This is tower. Copy. Please fly by the tower. I’ll try to get a visual on your landing gear.*” So, Bob buzzes the tower like Maverick in *Top Gun*, except it was dark and no one could see him. “*Yeah, this is tower. It’s too dark. I can’t tell if the gear’s down.*” Wait, what?! That’s it? What do you mean you can’t tell? A minute later the controller pops back on and tells Bob to try to buzz the tower again. He does. Still can’t tell. He’s stuck with two green lights. Another few long minutes pass and the crackling radio speaks again, “*Are you declaring an emergency?*” Chuckling, Bob said, “*Buddy, I declared an emergency in my shorts about 15-minutes ago.*” Bob started furiously sifting through his options, none of which were great.

You’ve done this, right? Been in a circumstance where you bank on one thing happening and it doesn’t. A job. A date. A bonus. An answer. We’re all waiting for more information, more confirmation and certainty but we’re still sitting with just two green lights. We always want more green lights than we have.

These things either mess with our heads or start to shape our hearts. Who do you trust? What does courage look like in this situation? It’s not that we have to risk everything like an extreme thrill seeker might. It’s just a wondering about how we quit circling the airport and land the plane. Don’t ignore the green lights you already have. Figure out what your next move is going to be, then make it. No one is remembered for what they only planned to do. You may want ten green lights before you do that risky thing God has for you to do but you’ve only got eight. Someone once said, “*All opportunities come with expiration dates.*”

Friends – as a Church – there are some things that God is calling us to do at this time, with the people that God has called together for such a time as this. Everything you are, everywhere you’ve been, all you’ve been through, the people that shaped you and even those that hurt you... all have brought you to this moment with enough courage to show up. And showing up may just be enough green light to not let this moment pass us by. Even in our uncertainties – we’ve claimed a few things that we’re sure of and we’re putting our weight on those things – namely who God says we are in Christ. We’re trusting *that* green light. It’s a vulnerable place to be but we’re doing it anyway. Sometimes when we ask God for an answer, God sends us each other. We’re just people; imperfect yet uniquely beautiful and gifted. What if we could be courageous enough to think God has something for this particular intersection of people to do together to make the world more kind, more just, more like love.

The tower had pretty much gone silent on Bob as he was circling the airport. That made sense. “*We’d said just about all we had to say, and words can’t turn into wheels,*” he said. So... here goes nothing. Bob finished his approach passed those first white lines on the landing strip. He brought the plane in as slow as possible with the nose as high as possible. The rear wheels touched down and as the nose was coming down, Bob counted down *three... two... one...* When he reached zero, there would either be a lot of propellers hitting a lot of concrete or a small bounce indicating the front wheel was down and locked. He reached zero. There was a bounce. And he started whooping and hollering as did the controller. “*Get this,*” he says. “*It turned out what had me all twisted while I was in the air was a burned-out five-cent light bulb.*”

Who wouldn’t want more green lights, right? But at some point, we get vulnerable, share our hearts, get some courage and go for it. You don’t need to take all the steps... just the next one. The difference between the number of green lights we want and the number we get from God is a decent description of what faith is. Faith isn’t *knowing* what we can’t see; it’s landing the plane anyway.<sup>2</sup> Are you ready to rumble? There are more green lights than we can see. Let’s get in the arena. Courage will carry us from there.

**Song of Focus**  
**“A Call to Courage (I’ll Be with You)”**

WORDS AND MUSIC BY ED VARNUM

1. I can hear a call to courage,  
to go forward with great faith.  
Still, I pull back so discouraged,  
and I wait.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Everybody Always* by Bob Goff. The story of Bob’s two-green-light-landing comes from Chapter ten of this work. Thomas Nelson Publishing. 2018.

2. I know some action is needed.  
I know something must be done.  
There's so much that goes unheeded,  
but I'm just one.

*Refrain:*

A voice within says, "I'll be with you.  
"In your spirit I abide.  
"I will strengthen you and lead you.  
"I'll be your guide. I'm by your side."

3. But still, I need some assurance.  
It's hard to leave this comfort zone.  
And I know I'll meet resistance,  
and I'm alone. Feel so alone.

*Refrain:*

A voice within says, "I'll be with you.  
"In your spirit I abide.  
"I will strengthen you and lead you.  
"I'll be your guide. I'm by your side."

4. God of grace, please give me courage.  
There is much that I don't know.  
But I trust that you are with me.  
Where you lead me, I will go. With you I'll go.

BROAD HEARTS BROAD MINDS BROAD REACH