

Title: God reveals himself
Thesis: God reveals himself to people.
Exodus 2-3

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Text: Exodus 2:1-3:6
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Welcome! Today we are in the second week of our study in the book of Exodus. Last week, as we began the series, we looked at the increasingly challenging situation God's people found themselves in while living in Egypt. There was a smear campaign intended to incite fear about them. They were then oppressed and enslaved; their slavery grew increasingly harsh and ruthless. Then there was a secret plan to kill their baby boys. Then a public policy required them kill their baby boys. The people were in misery, and they were crying out to God. Now most of us will never find ourselves in a position like that. But in our own way, we've all experienced pain. We've all experienced heartache. We've all experienced injustice, and we know what it's like to cry out to God for deliverance. We ended last week by looking at God's words from Exodus 3:7-8 **"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. 8 So I have come down to rescue them."** God has seen. God has heard. God is going to rescue them. God is planning their deliverance. And he is going to use a man named Moses to bring it about.

Moses' story begins in chapter 2 (Turn there with me). Now remember, Pharaoh is on a mission to kill all the Israelite baby boys. And presumably he was rather successful in his campaign. And at that time, an Israelite woman named Jochebed gave birth to a son. And as you can imagine, with the heart that only a mother can have, she did everything she could to keep him alive. Look what it says in 2:3 **But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile.** She's thinking, if I keep him in my home, he'll be discovered and murdered. This at least gives him a chance. But there is something subtle at work here in the original language that we miss in the English. When it says she got a **basket** for him, do you know the only other time that word is used in the entire bible is in reference to Noah's ark? Just like Noah built an ark that would result in salvation through water and the fulfillment of God's promises, here Moses' mother gets a basket...salvation through water and the fulfillment of God's promises.

You may know the story: Pharaoh's own daughter finds him and wants to raise him as her own child. and then Moses' sister, who was watching to see what would happen, asks if she can help, and if she can find a wet-nurse to help feed him. This was long before the days of baby formula. And who gets to be his wet-nurse? His mom, who is now being paid by Pharaoh to raise her own son.

Like with so many of the stories in the Bible, and many of the stories we've seen in our own lives, as well, what was meant for harm, what was meant for evil, God turns and redeems for the good. God used five different women to bring this about. Women who had no standing in ancient society. Women who couldn't own property because they were often viewed as property. Women were thought so lowly of that they couldn't testify in court ...The two midwives, the Moses' mom, Moses' sister, Pharaoh's daughter. God working through unlikely characters to accomplish salvation.

Moses grows up in Pharaoh's household. One day, he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite, and he came to the defense of his own countryman. He killed the Egyptian and buried the body in the sand. He's trying to be the hero. He's trying to be delivered, but he was doing it his own way, in his own strength. And as word spread about Moses killing an Egyptian, Pharaoh wanted Moses' life, so Moses went into exile and lived in the wilderness...for 40 years. There he found a wife, established a family, and formed a new identity for himself. He turned his back on his old life, on Egypt and his fellow Israelites who were in slavery in Egypt and lived as a shepherd. In fact, 3:1 says **Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian**, and think about what that means: here's a guy who was raised in the palace of the most powerful nation in the world at the time. Exposed to incomparable wealth, the best schools, powerful friends with influence, every opportunity imaginable at his fingertips. And what is he doing? Working for his father-in-law, tending sheep. Probably not the job or situation in life he dreamed about when he was a kid. Any reasonable person would have looked at him and said he underperformed. He's like the 1st round draft pick that never started for this team and dropped out of the league in just a couple of years. Everyone would have been disappointed, himself included.

Have you ever found yourself there? Not living up to other people's expectations for your life? Not living up to your expectations for your life? In a job you don't love, in a season of life that seems listless and pointless, going through a monotonous routine? The passion, the zeal, the wide-eyed optimism of your youth is gone. One gets the sense that's where Moses is at...and he's been there for 40 years. This man is now 80 years old. He's at that age when he should be cashing social security checks. That's when God shows up and changes everything.

Look at the way the chapter continues **and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness** (literally: *deep into the wilderness*) **and came to Horeb, the mountain of God**. And on the mountain of God, Moses is about to have an encounter with God. **2 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**. Think about what must have been going on in his mind. He's in the wilderness, in the desert. When something is on fire, it's consumed. I think about what it's like every April or May when I finally burn my Christmas tree from the previous year. It's engulfed in 20-foot flames and then charred in a manner of 30 seconds. And sadly we've all seen **pictures like this** one from Paradise, California. This is what happens when a fire that starts in a forest sweeps into a town. Nearly 85% of the residents in this town moved away, because their entire city was burned to the ground. Fire destroys things. Fire consumes things. But once the fuel source is gone, what happens to the flame? It dies out. No more fuel source, no more flame. But this flame keeps burning, and the bush was not consumed.

3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." **4 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." **5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."** **6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."** At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. **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. 8 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—(This is so important to take note of with the salvation God wants to bring about in people’s lives. It’s not just salvation *from* something; it’s salvation *to* something...out of Egypt, into the land of promise.) 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

What an incredible encounter. When you read this, you get the sense that everything that’s happened in Moses’ life up to this point was preparing him for this very moment, and that what happens in this moment is going to shape the rest of his life from this point forward. This meeting with God was the hinge point of his life. And I want to look at this passage a little bit deeper to talk about the God who revealed himself to Moses.

First, **Moses encountered a personal God.** We see this at the beginning of the passage in 3:4 **God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”** This interaction didn’t happen because Moses was on a mission to meet with God. This happened because God was on a mission to meet with Moses. This was not general revelation...O look at that sunset or that waterfall. That’s beautiful; I think that is God’s way of speaking to me. This was specific, personal intimate revelation - God speaks to him. And God doesn’t say “Hey there, shepherd.” Or “Hey there, guy.” Or “Hey there, Israelite.” He says, “Moses, Moses.” He calls him by name.

We’ve all been in situations where someone comes up to us and talks to us like we have been best friends for life, but no matter how hard we try, we just can’t remember their name. You try and try and try...but you can’t so you call them pal, bro, sister, or buddy. That was one of the most unexpectedly convenient parts of having a wife. When I don’t know someone’s name, I can look at them and say, “This is my lovely wife Keren.” And they introduce themselves. Perfect life hack. Across the board, everybody’s favorite word to hear pronounced in the entire English language is the sound of their own name. Salesmen often use it as a ploy to make you trust them and want to buy their products. When people hear their name, it makes them feel known and valued.

And the greater influence the person has, the more meaningful it is if they know your name. If you work at a company, obviously your boss is going to know your name, and your boss’s boss will probably know your name, but if your boss’s boss’s boss knows your name, that’s a great thing. Elli Lilly is one of the main employers in the city. Looking out I see several people who work for them. Can you imagine being at work tomorrow and you pass David Ricks, your CEO, in the hallway and he calls you by name? There are 40,000 people who work for your company, and the CEO knows you. Or imagine being out at Saint Elmo’s. And if you’re there it wouldn’t be unheard of to see Peyton Manning. And because he’s Peyton Manning, everyone knows who he is and wants to go up to his table and say hi. Can you imagine if Peyton Manning came up to your table and called you by name? It means something to us when someone knows our name. Moses encountered a personal God who knew his name.

And he doesn’t just say his name once, he says, “Moses, Moses.” Don’t overlook that. I’ve been married for 4 ½ years now...I can count on one hand how many times Keren has said my name

twice in a row. And it's either when I'm in serious trouble, or I've done something really sweet and captured her affection. God says, "Moses, Moses" - the construction is called an emphatic vocative. God is speaking directly to Moses. God is not just having a conversation with him. He's communicating that he sees Moses, that he knows everything about him. Moses encountered a personal God who knew his name. And can I tell you that God knows your name, too. God sees you. God knows everything about you. The Bible says that God knows when we sit down and when we rise up, that he discerns our thoughts from afar (he knows everything that is going on in your mind, and he has every second of your entire life), and that before a word is on our tongue, he knows it completely. God knows you. He is a personal God.

Moses encountered a personal God. We also see that **Moses encountered a holy God**. This is really clear when we look at 3:5 **"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."** The very first thing God says to Moses is don't come any closer; this is holy ground. Translation: You can't just wander into my presence flippantly and approach me however you want. I am a holy God. To come near, there needs to be some changes in your life.

Our human tendency, we all do this, is to imagine that God is just like us. If God is just like us, then we can approach him just as we are without making any changes. If God is higher than us, and holier than us, we are going to have to humble ourselves and make some changes in our lives. I love the story of George Fredrich Handel. You'll recognize him as a world-famous musical composer, but did you know that most of his life he was a complete failure? He went bankrupt multiple times. He was ostracized from his family. But then came a moment when he had an epiphany. He surrendered his life to Jesus, and the love of God overwhelmed him. And he sat down at the piano and wrote this composition that we know today as Handel's Messiah. (**play the song**). And this one little song captured the joy and freedom and hope that he found in Christ. It's a big song. And it captures the majesty and supremacy of God. Far more impressive than just writing this song was what he chose to do with it. He knew he had something special, so instead of simply debuting it in his church as would have been customary, he decided to rent out a theater with what little money he had and debut it to the public. He thought, "There are a lot of people out there who have not experienced the love of God the way I have and I want them to experience it in a visceral way. So he debuted Messiah in front of 700 people one night. And they were blown away by it. And word spread. And for 30 straight nights, it was a sold-out theater. The last night, King George sat on the front row. And in the middle of the song, during the Hallelujah chorus, King George stood to his feet and then bowed his head in reverence. And the whole audience followed suit. And he said, "Even a king will be humbled in the presence of the living God."

King George bows his head, Moses takes off his shoes. When you encounter a holy God, there will always be a change in your life. In fact, that may be the only way to tell if you have actually had an interaction with the real God. Has the God you worship confronted you? Has the God you worship contradicted you? Has the God you worship called you to take off your shoes, change the way you speak, change the way you spend your time, change what you do on Friday nights, change the way you date, change the way you spend your money? When you meet a holy God, he calls you to take off your shoes. To change your lifestyle. To change your priorities. The book

of Hebrews says, “**Without holiness no one will see the Lord**” (Hebrews 12:14). And this is not a one time thing. The closer he invites you to get, the more changes he’ll call you to make!

It is so important for us to talk about holiness, because for most of us, as we go through life, this is our tendency. **Exaggerate our holiness and minimize God’s holiness.** We simultaneously have far too high of a view of ourselves and far too low of a view of God. This can happen as long as God is not just a figment of your imagination, someone you’ve heard about, someone you have perhaps even formulated in your own image, after your own preferences and personal desires. But when you actually meet God, like Moses does in this passage, you take off your shoes, and like Moses did in 3:6 you hide your face. This is like when Isaiah encountered God. He said, “Woe to me. I am ruined. I am a sinful person and I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” God is holy. And like metal placed in the center of a blazing fire, when we truly encounter the living God, if we press in deep enough, all that is not pure in our lives will be exposed and melt away.

Moses encountered a personal God, a holy God, and last, **Moses encountered a loving God.** Listen to what God says in 3:8 “**I have come down to rescue them.**” God does not leave us in our misery. He doesn’t give us the light to see our error only to walk away and be left on our own. He enters into our story. He comes down to rescue us.

Perhaps you remember last June with this **soccer team from Thailand** got caught in a cave during monsoon season. After a week of frantic exploration, a team of rescue workers finally found them. Then the real challenge began. The kids were 2.5 miles from the entrance of the cave. The water was rising. The oxygen running out, and no one knew how they were going to get these kids out. With international attention, more than 10,000 people showed up from around the world to help, including 2,000 soldiers and representatives from 100 different nations. In all they used seven ambulances, ten helicopters, 700 diving cylinders and pumped out more than a billion liters of water from the cave. Then on July 10th, after nearly three weeks in the cave, the last of the boys and the coach were safely brought out.

Think about what went into that? All the energy, all the coordinated effort, tens of millions of dollars, and one rescuer who lost his life? Why were people willing to pay such a price? Because the lives of those boys was worth it. And when God looks at us, caught in our sin, caught in our suffering, unable to help ourselves, unable to free ourselves on our own. He says, you are not alone. I will pay any price, even the price of my one and only son, to come down to rescue you. God is love.

So many people today want to make God out to be only Holy, and not loving. Or only loving and not holy. All law, with very little love. Or all love with very little law. Both of those Gods are artificial. The God of the Bible is both. His holiness and his love are not in contradiction to one another, they are in concert with one another. Tim Keller says that the gospel is the message that you are more sinful than you ever dared to imagine, but at the very same time you are more loved than you ever dared to hope. In God’s perfect holiness, our sins are revealed. In God’s perfect love, he comes to us and makes us like himself.

That's the God that revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush— a personal God, a holy God, a loving God. And did you see how he responded? In Exodus 3:3, when Moses saw the bush it says, "**Moses thought, I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up.**" Look at that phrase: **I will go over and see this strange sight.** If Moses didn't press pause on his routine, on his business, on his other commitments and priorities, he would have missed out on all of this. But because he paid attention, he met God that day. Just like Moses, God is wanting to reveal himself to us, we have to be willing to slow down and pay attention and look a little deeper. If we do, we will find him. What does Hebrews 11 says that God rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Moses came face to face with a personal God, a holy God, and a loving God in a burning bush. And it was life altering for him. But I think if Moses himself were here today, do you know what he would say? You think I was fortunate that God revealed himself to me in a burning bush? God has revealed himself to you by hanging on a tree. This is how God has once and for all revealed himself to the world. The God of the bush and the God of the cross are one and the same: He is a personal God who knows your name. He is a holy God who refuses deal lightly with sin. In fact he is so intent to get rid of our sin that he died to pay the price for them, which is the ultimate proof of his love for us. Look to the God of the cross, he is personal, he is holy, he is loving. Let's open up our eyes, let's open up our hearts. Let's respond to the God who has revealed himself.

