

Knowing the God who Calls us.

2.2.2020

Message 5

Exodus 3:1–22 (CSB)

MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH

3 Meanwhile, Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²Then the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire within a bush. As Moses looked, he saw that the bush was on fire but was not consumed. ³So Moses thought, “I must go over and look at this remarkable sight. Why isn’t the bush burning up?”

⁴When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called out to him from the bush, “Moses, Moses!”

“Here I am,” he answered.

⁵“Do not come closer,” he said. “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶Then he continued, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery of my people in Egypt, and have heard them crying out because of their oppressors. I know about their sufferings, ⁸and I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them from that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the territory of the Canaanites, Hethites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. ⁹So because the Israelites’ cry for help has come to me, and I have also seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them, ¹⁰therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

¹¹ But Moses asked God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

12 He answered, "I will certainly be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I am the one who sent you: when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will all worship God at this mountain."

13 Then Moses asked God, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what should I tell them?"

14 God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM.,u This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you." 15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered in every generation.

16 "Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said: I have paid close attention to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt. 17 And I have promised you that I will bring you p 49 up from the misery of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, Hethites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey.

18 They will listen to what you say. Then you, along with the elders of Israel, must go to the king of Egypt and say to him: The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Now please let us go on a three-day trip into the wilderness so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

19 "However, I know that the king of Egypt will not allow you to go, even under force from a strong hand. 20 But when I stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my miracles that I will perform in it, after that, he will let you go. 21 And I will give these people such favor with the Egyptians that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. 22 Each woman will ask her neighbor and any woman staying in her house for silver and gold jewelry, and clothing, and you will put them on your sons and daughters. So you will plunder the Egyptians."

Intro.

A. Today's passage is, by and far, one of the deepest and most influential passages in the Old Testament.

1. We have God descending and calling Moses.

2. We have this great dialogue between the older, wiser Moses and the All-Mighty God.
3. We have burning bushes and the revelation of God's name.
4. Part of my job as Pastor is to discover what God is wanting to say to us from passages like this, and how God wants to present it to us.

B. How I think we should hear this passage is through two filters:

1. First, I believe it is important for us to discover what God reveals about Himself to Moses and to us.
2. Then, it is important for us to hear how God often calls people to serve Him.
3. What I am going to try to do is, this week, show you 5 things that God reveals about Who He is in this passage.
 - a. Because, before we can fully serve and trust God, we need to know God.
 - b. While it is possible for God to reveal himself and our call in the same place and same time, our service to God will never outrun our understanding of God.
 - c. This week, I want to help with our understanding of God.
4. Next week, we will look at 5 objections we have to ministry and the 5 promises God gives to empower that ministry.

5 things that God reveals about Himself in this passage:

1. First, the God that calls us is Holy.

A. Throughout the upcoming pages, the holiness of God is a major theme.

1. God calls Israel to be a Holy people and a Royal priesthood.
2. They are to be holy, because God is holy.

3. The revelation of this holiness stands out in God's appearance to Moses.

B. The "Angel of the Lord" appeared in a flame of fire.

1. First, whenever you read about the "Angel of the Lord" in the OT, you need to take notice.

a. This is what we call a "Theophany".

b. It's a physical appearance of God in the days before Jesus' birth.

c. We can think of these moments as times when Jesus came down, long before He was born in flesh.

d. This didn't happen often, so when He is mentioned you need to pay attention. Something special is happening.

2. The Angel is accompanied in fire.

1. Fire symbolizes the power of God's holiness.

2. Fire represents the purifying power of God.

3. Fire also represents God's anger toward sin.ⁱ

3. It should be noted that this is the first occurrence of the word "holy" in the Bible. ⁱⁱ

1. The original audience understood what holiness meant.

2. But for us, not so much.

C. Holy means to be separated and distinct from.

1. God is holy because He is separate from His creation.

2. He is also completely separated from sin, there is NO sin in Him.

3. When God encourages holiness in us, He is calling us to be separated and distinct from our world.

a. **You can be holy and not be weird.**

b. Yet, **holiness will lead us to be different from our surroundings in areas where God and culture disagree.**

D. The God that calls us is not like anyone or anything else.

1. His ways are not our ways.
2. His thoughts not our thoughts.
3. His plans are not our plans.
4. God is holy, separate, and distinct from creation.
 - a. Moses, who lived in a world that saw the Sun as god, the Nile as god, and everything else as god, needed to realize that the real God is distinct from all of those things.
 - b. We find evidence of God in our surroundings, but we don't find God in them.

2. Second, the God that calls us is Creative.

A. Think about how God got Moses' attention.

1. He inhabits a bush.
2. A bush on fire is not a unique thing in that part of the world.
3. But a bush that is afire, and that doesn't burn up, is creative.

B. Our God is amazingly creative.

1. Each person, animal, and plant are unique in their own way.
2. Each of our fingerprints are different.
3. Our eyes are unique to each of us, so that we can identify a person from retinas.
4. Each one of us has their own set of DNA.

C. We can look at God's creation and see the creativity that God has displayed.

1. The mountains hold their own beauty.

2. The ocean is creative in her sounds, smells, and sights.
3. Each night sky reveals a creative expanse that allows us to soak in wonder and majesty.
4. Everywhere we look, we see the creative fingerprint of God, and what we see is only a small-sampling of God's creativity.
 - a. Look at your neighbor and say:
 - b. Neighbor...you are...a piece of work.

D. As God tries to get our attention, He will often use creative ways to do so.

1. He may use a vision to get your attention.
2. He may use a life-changing situation to reveal your calling.
3. He may use a friend or stranger to speak a unique word to you.
4. Not only may your calling come from a creative place, but God's answer to your prayer will often be creative too.
 - a. He may not answer my prayer in the same way as yours.
 - b. He may handle my situation differently than yours.
 - c. The more we reflect upon God's creativity, the more in awe we should be of Him.
5. When was the last time you were surprised by God?
 - a. Vibrant relationships of any kind contain both consistency and creativity.
 - b. I am thankful that God is the same yesterday, today and forever.
 - c. I am also thankful that God is never boring and always creative.

d. This “creativity” will display itself as God deals with Egypt through the plagues and as God does miracles in the wilderness for Israel.

3. Third, The God who calls us is Covenantal.

A. A Covenant is a contract and agreement between two parties.

1. Sometimes the covenant is mutual, both sides have an equal part.

2. But the most important covenants in Scripture are one-sided:

a. In the case of God’s Covenant with Abraham, it was God who promised to do all the work and all the blessing and all the fulfilling.

b. **When we say that God is Covenantal, we are saying that God is a promise keeping God.**

B. On this mountain, God revealed himself as the God of Moses’ fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

1. God is reminding Moses of where Moses has come from.

a. Moses had experienced a lot of trauma in his 80 years:

b. He avoided being aborted, abandoned in the Nile, rescued by Pharaoh’s household, raised as an Egyptian, murdered a man, and chased out of his country.

c. Since then, Moses has been 40 years in a far-away place.

d. Then one day, God shows up and says, “I am the God of your fathers...”

2. Moses was never forgotten, never forsaken, and never alone.

a. *Even when life didn’t go the way he had planned, God was there.*

b. *Even though your life may not be going the way you had originally planned, know that God is still there.*

c. God's covenant brings continuity in a world of chaos.

C. Some of us today find our personal world in chaos.

1. Remember, throughout Scripture, chaos is the domain of Satan.

2. We find chaos everywhere: internally, at work, at home, in our world.

3. When our world is spinning out of control, what we need is an encounter with God and His promises.

4. We need that reminder that God never forgets, never fails, and never quits.

a. God told Moses in (Vs. 17) that He had promised to bring God's people out of Egypt's misery to the land of the Canaanites, Hethites...

b. Remember, this is specific covenant language that ties what God is doing to what He had promised.

c. What God is doing in your life is directly tied to what God has promised.

D. Some of us need to go home this week and look at what God has promised.

1. We need to get reacquainted with God again.

2. Exodus 3 might have been Moses' first encounter with God.

a. If so, Moses needed to encounter God before He could serve God.

b. But if this was not Moses' first experience with God, then this experience served as a reminder of who God is.

c. All of us here need an encounter with God no matter if it is the first time or the 100th time.

3. We encounter God by experiencing Jesus.

4. Fourth, The God who Calls us is eternal. (I Am)

A. Exodus 3 reveals God's proper name.

1. There are a lot of names or titles for God in Scripture:
 - a. El Shaddai,
 - b. God All-mighty.
 - c. God my Provider.
2. But God's PROPER seems to be translated "I am".
3. In Hebrew this name was never written completely.
 - a. The Jews, fearful of blaspheming the name of God, wrote God's name as YHWH, Tetragrammaton (the 4 letters).
 - b. There are really a lot of questions and theories about God's name dating back thousands of years.

B. What is significant is this: When Moses asked God, "Am I to deliver Israel from Egypt?" God responded, I AM will do it.

1. Isn't it kind of weird that God revealed himself as a "verb"?
2. He didn't describe himself or project some sort of persona.
3. Instead, God declared "I AM WHO I AM".
 - a. Other translations are:
 - b. "I will be who I be".
 - c. "I will create what I create".

4. What is God saying here?

C. Primarily, it appears that He is saying that He is not a new God.

1. The same God.
2. The Covenantal God.
3. The enduring God.

4. The everlasting God.
5. The eternal God.
6. The all-powerful God.
7. The God who is not one among many, but the Only God.

D. If you had been raised in captivity, amongst a nation of many gods, it would have been important to know that the God who is doing all of these miracles is the same God their ancestors worshipped?

1. Our personal lives are so full of inconsistency and fluctuation.

a. One minute we are up and getting ahead.

b. Next minute we are so far behind we don't think we will ever catch up.

2. **In an ever-changing world, it is reassuring that God is never changing for He is eternal.**

a. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

b. When I am at my best, He is God.

c. When I am at my worst, He is God.

d. He is God in the Good News and the Bad.

e. He is the God of the mountain top and the God of the valley.

f. Everything around me might change and will change, but GOD will never change.

3. God, therefore, is our anchor, our rock, and our fortress against all that life throws our way.

5. **Lastly, The God who Calls us is Gentle towards us.**

There are two examples of God's gentleness in this passage.

A. The first example is that the bush that was set aflame but was not consumed.

1. Humans consume whatever we touch.
2. Rarely do we leave something or someone better than we met them.
3. But **God is able to use us without abusing us.**
 - a. Jesus said come to me, all you are weary and heavy laden, and I will...give you rest.
 - b. Moses watched Pharaoh use the Hebrew people as slaves, as chattel, and as an expendable workforce.
 - c. Yet YHWH God is so gentle that even a worthless bush is not used up but preserved and cared for as a tool for Moses' calling.
 - d. **If your calling is from God, you will be poured out but you won't be burned out.**

B. Lastly, We see the Creative, Holy, Covenantal, Eternal God who allows a man to express himself in His presence.

1. Think about what happens here:
 - a. God approaches Moses.
 - b. Moses approaches God until God says He is on holy ground.
 - c. Then, for 1 ½ chapters, God allows Moses to speak with and question Him.
 - d. Later on, Pharaoh doesn't put up with Moses this much.
 - e. But God does.
2. **God was gentle towards Moses' fears and insecurities.**
 - a. Next week, we will see that for every fear and excuse Moses had, God had an assurance.
 - b. Some of us here today are hearing God call us but we are afraid He will reject us because of our present fear and insecurity.

c. But God won't do that.

Closing:

A. Maybe some of us here today want to draw closer to God.

1. But we don't for many reasons.
2. Our past, our weaknesses, or any other reason.
3. Let me just say, that God rarely calls us when we are in a place of strength but when we are in a place of weakness.
 - a. Moses was in Midian.
 - b. A place he had not planned on being in.
 - c. It was a transitional place, a place of waiting and learning.
4. Wherever you are is the perfect place to meet God.

B. Today, I want to give us all a chance to meet God.

1. In the middle of your crazy life, you can meet God.
2. In the middle of a tough diagnoses, you can meet God.
3. In retirement, you can meet God.
4. Today, we all can meet God.

ⁱ Perhaps the basis of this symbolism lies in the purificatory, as well as the destructive, properties of fire (Deut. 4:24); the metal refiner was a familiar sight in the ancient world (Mal. 3:2). Normally, however, fire seems to speak of God's holiness and, in particular, his anger in relation to sin (Exod. 19:18; 32:10).

R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 71.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.