



Exodus

Freed to Worship

Exodus 3:1-9

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Wednesday Evening Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Exodus: Freed to Worship

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Opening Comments

- Turn to **Exodus 3**
- We are continuing our study: **Freed to Worship**
- The background so far in the book of Exodus
- The people of Israel are in Egypt
- God has blessed them and they have grown into a large population
- The Pharaoh becomes paranoid about the Hebrews revolting or escaping – begins to persecute them
- Then he tries to have the Hebrews boys killed as they are born and then tells the Egyptian people to throw the baby Hebrews boys into the Nile River
- In chapter two we find the account of the birth of Moses
- In God's providence, His constant working behind the scenes of events of history, Moses is rescued from the Nile by the daughter of Pharaoh
- He is raised for a few years by his own mother, and then sent to Pharaoh's daughter to be raised by her
- At forty, Moses kills an Egyptian he sees beating a Hebrew, and then flees for his life to Midian
- He ends up staying with the priest of Midian and marries one of his daughters and has a child
- Another forty years pass by the end of chapter two
- Moses has settled down and established a life that I am guessing that he planned on continuing for the rest of his life
- God's plan was not completed yet, and Moses was to play a vital role in it
- The first two chapters of Exodus cover about 400 years – the next 38 cover about one year – a year of deliverance or redemption

Teaching

- **Exodus: Freed to Worship**
- Moses is about to have an encounter with the living God

- I don't know about you, but there have been many times that I have wished for an encounter with God like this
- And usually that is when we need something from Him
- There is a lot we can learn from Moses' encounter with God
- Let's get into the text for tonight
- **Exodus 3:1**
- The first thing we learn about encountering God is – **God appears in the ordinary**
- Moses is going about his life doing what he has probably been doing for decades – this is just another day at the office for Moses
- When he woke up in the morning, he probably didn't think to himself, today I am going to encounter the living God
- More likely, he had been thinking about the flock, and his mind was probably far from God
- God is going to interrupt Moses' day with an experience that will radically transform Moses' life
- Moses wasn't doing something spiritual
- He was doing ordinary, mundane things he had probably done hundreds of times before
- We don't need to go to the top of a mountain or to a specific church building to have a radical encounter with God
- He can show up wherever we are
- And the lesson in that is – be faithful right where you are, and trust Him to get you to where He can meet with you when the time is right
- There are a few things I want to draw your attention to in this verse
- First, Moses was 'tending the flock of Jethro'
- After forty years, Moses is still working for his father-in-law
- One of the things that God did for Moses' in that forty years is to teach him humility
- That will show up regularly in the future studies
- Second, the name of his father-in-law here is Jethro – in the last chapter it said his father-in-law's name was Reuel
- In my studies I couldn't find a good reason for the two different names
- It is possible that he had two names

- It is also possible that one of them was a title
- Turn to **Exodus 24**
- The third thing is the location of this event – Horeb, the mountain of God
- Another place was also called the ‘mountain of God’
- **Exodus 24:13-16**
- Turn back to **Exodus 3**
- Horeb and Mount Sinai are the same place
- While the exact location of this place is not certain, most place it at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula
- Even in this we see the providence of God
- God didn’t choose this location because that was where Moses was
- This is where God was, and God arranged the events of Moses’ life to get him to this place at this moment of time
- Moses didn’t stumble upon the place where God was
- God, through the normal events of Moses’ life led Moses to this place

Exodus 19:4

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.

- The same is true of all of us
- God is working out the circumstances and events of our life to get us right where He wants us
- So, God appears in the ordinary – but that doesn’t we always notice God in the ordinary

• **Exodus 3:2-3**

- The next thing we learn about having an encounter with God – **God needs to get our attention**
- Moses was doing his thing with the flock and as he glances over he sees something strange – a bush is on fire
- And that got his attention, but wouldn’t have held his attention
- When God wants to get our attention, He will usually do it in a way that makes us certain that it is Him
- A burning bush could be explained naturally
- But a burning bush that wasn’t being consumed, that called for a closer look

- Before we look at Moses' response, there are a couple of things in verse 2 I want to look at
- First, says this was an appearance of the Angel of the Lord
- And in verse 4 says God called to Moses from the midst of the bush
- This is referred to by most as a 'theophany' – a visible manifestation of the invisible God
- A later theophany was the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night as the Israelites travelled through the wilderness to the Promised Land
- As well as several others
- Some believe this to be a Christophany – a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus – there is not good evidence for that
- Second thing about the burning bush – it says some things about God
- It reveals God's power over creation
- Both fire and the bush were created by God
- Fire by its very nature consumes whatever it is burning
- And yet God is able to cause the bush to burn with fire and not be consumed
- And the burning bush also speaks of the eternal nature of God and of His self-sufficiency
- Everything that God does in the world does not consume Him in any way – He can burn forever and not be consumed
- He provides the energy for the fire and keeps the bush whole
- Moses can't help but be drawn to this scene
- Stephen relates this account to the religious leaders of Israel right before he is stoned **Acts 7:31**

When Moses saw *it*, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him...

- What is important for us in this is that God showed Moses who He was before He told Moses who He was
- God gets our attention in whatever way is necessary so that we will be ready to hear His voice when He speaks to us
- For a rare few, it is when God blesses them in some radical way
- I say rare, because most would not see God in the blessing
- For most, God is seen in the storm, or trial, or temptation

- God doesn't bring the storm, but He uses them to get our attention
- Often it takes sinking in the storm to get us to the point of seeing that God is trying to get our attention
- **Exodus 3:4**
- The third thing we need to know about an encounter with God – **God will present Himself once He has our attention**
- As long as there is anything in our life that is clamoring for our attention, we will be less likely to have a radical encounter with God
- Too often we are hindering the Spirit of God from ministering to us because we are distracted by other things
- I like the fact that God called Moses by name – tis points to the reality that God is a personal God
- He is Moses' God – He is my God – He is your God **Psalm 40:16-17**
Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, "The LORD be magnified!"¹⁷ But I *am* poor and needy; yet the LORD thinks upon me. You *are* my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.
- Moses hears the voice, though at this point he doesn't know who is talking to him
- Imagine that! Out here on the backside of the wilderness on a desolate mountain, probably all by himself
- And he sees this bush burning but not being burned up
- And then from the bush he hears a voice calling him by name
- I don't know about you but I am thinking that I would be a little freaked out by all of that
- But Moses responds, 'Here I am.' = I am listening
- **Exodus 3:5**
- The mysterious voice now gives Moses two instructions and a declaration
- The instructions – do not draw near - take off your sandals
- The declaration – this is holy ground
- We will start with the declaration then we will come back to the instructions
- The Lord says that where Moses was holy ground
- This is the first reference to God's holiness in the Bible
- The word 'holy' literally means separated – or set apart **Philip Ryken**

In the case of God, holiness means that He is set apart from everything He has made.

- Since God made everything, He is set apart from everything He made
- He is more perfect than all of His creation
- There is an immense gap between God's creation and God **Hosea 11:9**

For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst...

- That gap is symbolized in the first instruction – ‘Do not draw near this place’
- It was later symbolized in the Tabernacle and then temple by the curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies
- It was dangerous to approach God's holiness too closely
- The account of the death of Uzziah for touching the Ark of the Covenant which was kept in the Holy of Holies pictures that
- God tells Moses to keep a safely distance
- The next instruction is to take off his sandals
- This act pictures two basic things
- First, it shows respect, reverence, and subservience
- It is a show of humility before a superior
- Second, and more importantly, it acknowledges the holiness of God
- Symbolically, the shoe picked up and carried the dirt and dust of the world, a picture of sin
- By removing the sandal confessed that the person before you was holier than you
- It is not stated whether Moses complied or not, but the obvious assumption is that he did
- And I imagine he didn't waste any time doing it
- It is then that God identifies Himself
- **Exodus 3:5**
- I think it is important to comment on the fact that God asked Moses to obey before He identified Himself to Moses as God
- I wonder if there are times in our lives where God is waiting to reveal Himself to us because we haven't obeyed Him in some simple instruction
- It is as if God is saying obey Me then you will meet with Me
- Too often people say, ‘Meet with me God, then I will obey You.’

- That doesn't work – obey first!
- God identifies Himself, first in a very personal way
- I am the God of your father – Amram
- Then God identifies Himself as the God of Moses ancestors
- What isn't obvious is these descriptions are all in the present tense
- Which means they continue
- Jesus used this verse to prove the resurrection **Matthew 22:31-32**
But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.
- It is impossible to know what Moses believed about God up to this point
- Based on the beginning of this verse, we sense that his father believed in God
- But it is not clear how much influence Amram would have had on Moses once Moses was given to Pharaoh's daughter to raise
- He was raised in the court of Pharaoh
- The Egyptians worshipped many different false gods
- But he seems to know enough to respond in the correct way
- Says, 'Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look upon God.'
- Even though the burning bush was only a visible manifestation of the living God, Moses knew enough to be afraid to look upon Him
- This is the right response from Moses
- The only right way to come into the presence of a holy God is to be holy ourselves
- Moses knew that he was not holy – he killed the Egyptian - he was a murderer
- In fact, no human could ever enter into the presence of God and live
- God's holiness would consume our un-holiness like fire
- But in the book of Hebrews we are encouraged to enter God's presence **Hebrews 4:16**
Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- We can't do that based on our holiness or righteousness, because we don't have any **1 Corinthians 1:30**
...you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption...

- When we receive Christ as our Savior – He imputes, or credits to our spiritual account, His righteousness – His holiness **Colossians 1:21-22**
And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight...

- That is why Jesus told us that He was the only way to the Father **John 14:6**

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

- Only through Christ can we be holy enough to be in the Father's presence
- In the Hebrews verse we were told to come boldly
- That doesn't mean prideful or arrogantly
- We should come just as Moses did, first by removing our sandals = repenting of our sins
- And second with our face hidden – humbling ourselves before Him
- The idea of coming boldly means we can come with the confidence of knowing that God will not reject ever, or for any reason, because we are in Christ, His Son
- As Moses stands there with His face hidden, the Lord begins to reveal why He is talking to Moses
- **Exodus 3:7-9**
- This is a repeat of what we saw at the end of chapter two
- But now includes a glimpse of what Moses is going to do for the Lord
- God intends to deliver His people, the Hebrews, and keep His promise to Abraham to bring them back into the land of Canaan
- Next time we will look at the calling of Moses – the reluctant deliverer
- In verse 8 the Lord says, 'I have come down to deliver them'
- God is going to use Moses, but it is God who will do the delivering
- The people of God were in bondage in Egypt
- About 1,400 years later God came to deliver people from bondage
- Except instead of coming Himself, He sent His Son **John 3:16**
For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- Instead of being in bondage to a government, all people are in bondage to sin

- Jesus came to deliver us from that sin
- And just like Moses, we have been invited to play a role in the delivering of people from the bondage of sin **Matthew 28:19-20**
Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.
- It is still God who does the delivering, but we as His people get the eternal privilege of being used by Him to bring people to freedom in Christ
- There are lots of reasons why we don't
- But that is for next week in the second half of chapter 4
- **Amen?!**