

Hope Church South Haven July 13th, 2025

From the Nile to Nebo #3: the burning bush.

Exodus 3:1-15

We started two weeks ago with the series called – FROM THE NILE TO NEBO. The life of Moses.

- Forty years have passed since Moses ended up in Midian. MIDIAN was a **region east of Egypt**, across the Red Sea.
- Moses was 80 years old. He was married. He was a father. He worked as a shepherd for his father-in-law.
- During this time in Midian, **God restored Moses** and **prepared him** for a new season.
- While Moses was living the life, things were getting worse for the Israelites back in Egypt— they're SUFFERING INTENSIFIED.

In this context Exodus 3 happens. Instead of just reading or listening to the familiar story, let's *see* and *feel* what happened to Moses at the burning bush:

Video – Moses and the burning bush.

Three key promises for today in Exodus 3 that I want to focus on:

Exodus 3:1-6: God is the God of encounters.

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush.

- It was just a normal day at the office.
- The HEBREW WORD used for bush was used to describe a small bush. **Few feet in diameter.**
- Fire in the Bible symbolizes **God's presence and power**.
- Exodus 3:2 uses the HEBREW מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה (*mal-ak JHWH*) to describe the being that appears to Moses.
- In most Bibles it is TRANSLATED as “the angel of the Lord.” But later in the encounter its JHWH speaking: was it God in the burning bush or an angel pretending to be God?
- A more grammatical correct TRANSLATION for *mal-ak JHWH* is “the angel who is JHWH.”
- In this story, God reveals Himself to Moses **as an angel**.

Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.” 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.”

- God calls Moses by his name. It’s evident that **God knows Moses**.
- In ancient Semitic culture, if someone SAID YOUR NAME TWO TIMES, it showed **affection** and that they wanted to **be your friend**.
- It’s a deeper moment than God just calling his minion for a **quest**.

Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” 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.

Exodus 3:1-6 NIV

- **אַדְמַת־קֹדֶשׁ** (*admat qodesh*) – God ordered Moses to take off his sandals.
- In BIBLICAL TIMES, removing of your sandals was a **sign of reverence and respect** in the ancient East.
- Completely different from today – you better keep those puppies in their cages.

- In that moment God revealed himself to Moses as the **God of his ancestors**—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- Moses realized that he was talking to the SAME GOD his **family worshipped**.

PROMISE: God is the God that wants to connect with you!

⇒ The challenge for us today is that we have long **to do list**. We have things to **think about**.

Life is full of distractions.

⇒ We are too busy and too distracted that we miss the moments when God is TRYING TO GET OUR ATTENTION.

⇒ Side note: I wonder how many times Moses walked past the burning bush before he finally saw it.

⇒ In EXODUS 3 God reveals Himself again as a God that wants to **connect with people**. That He is a God that **speaks**.

⇒ In **EXODUS 3** God is telling you that He wants to connect with you.

⇒ ENCOUNTERS with God can happen in one of two ways: intentional, or **unexpected**.

- We need to live with an **expectation that God wants to connect with us**. To experience God's tangibly presence in unexpected places and conversations.

- But we also need to be **intentional**. We need to make time for God in our busy schedules.
- There's an old idea in Irish theology called "***thin places***."
 - Thin places are those moments or places where HEAVEN and EARTH feels **very close**. Where the divine and eternal is reachable in this world.
 - Where God's presence is TANGIBLE.
 - It could be a **place** or a **moment** or **people**.
- I need to figure out where or when I feel the **closest to God**.
- Whether it's reading the Bible or meditating or praying or worship or being creative or journaling.
- And I need to INTENTIONALLY SCHEDULE those moments in my everyday life.

⇒ We live with the promise, that because of Jesus God poured the Holy Spirit on us – the Spirit within and the **Spirit upon**. God's Spirit is living inside of us.

⇒ This means that wherever we are, that wherever **we go**, that whomever we meet, we are STANDING ON HOLY GROUND. Admat qodesh.

⇒ In the good and the bad and the ugly. In my successes and my mistakes and failures. I'm STANDING ON HOLY GROUND. Admat qodesh.

- ⇒ God's presence changes everything — every moment and every conversation and every person and every emotion – becomes holy because I'm standing on admat qodesh.
- ⇒ Insane gift that we never should take it for granted.

Exodus 3:7-10: God's compassion moves Him into action.

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. 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—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.

Exodus 3:7-10 NIV

- **EXODUS 3:7-10** emphasizes God's compassion for Israel and God's URGENCY to help his people.
- God gives a CLEAR DESCRIPTION of the promised land to Moses.
 - He names the nations living there — these tribes were important groups in the Old Testament.
 - He describes it as **a land of abundance, blessing, and provision**.

- God tells Moses: **you are my gameplan** to fulfill the promise I made to Abraham 400 years ago in Genesis 15! #nopressure

PROMISE: Our hurts and pain and brokenness and struggles matter.

- ⇒ God is not distant or uncaring. He **does not ignore** our cries for help.
- ⇒ God is DEEPLY MOVED when He sees our suffering and the **injustices we go through** and the evil we face.
- ⇒ God's **compassion** is REAL. He wants to bring hope and healing.
- ⇒ God PROVED IT 2000 YEARS AGO when Jesus was born into this messy crazy beautiful world we live in.
- ⇒ Jesus was INCARNATED because God wanted to **save us** from our pain. He wanted to **save us** from our sins. He wanted to **save us** from our brokenness.
- ⇒ Jesus **showed God's love** in a real and TANGIBLE way.
- ⇒ He healed people who were sick, comforted those who were hurting, and stood up for what was right. He received the punishment that we deserved.

But the fact is, it was our pains he carried— our disfigurements, all the things wrong with us. We thought he brought it on himself, that God was punishing him for his own failures. But it was

our sins that did that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him—our sins! He took the punishment, and that made us whole. Through his bruises we get healed.

Isaiah 53:4-5 The MESSAGE

- ⇒ EXODUS 3 reminds me that **every part of me matters to God.**
- ⇒ God is not afraid of **my mess or my pain or my failures.** He wants to step into my struggles and my sadness.
- ⇒ God's desire is to HEAL US. To MAKE US NEW. To GIVE US A FRESH START. He wants to REWRITE OUR STORIES.

God wants to bring joy not pain, peace not war, healing not suffering. Therefore, instead of declaring anything and everything to be the will of God, we must be...attentive to God's love without fear.

Henri Nouwen

Exodus 3:11-15: God is the guarantor (gah-rin-tor) of His promises.

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

- Moses wasn't saying no to God by **responding with questions**.
- He was FEELING INADEQUATE. Unprepared. Felt he was not being good enough.
- God **didn't call a time-out** to try and sort out Moses' feelings.
- Instead of answering all of Moses' questions, God gave Moses a PROMISE and a SIGN.
 - God promised – **I will be with you**. I will show you what to do. My presence will give you the authority you need.
 - The sign of a job well done: all the Israelites would **worship God** at MOUNT SINAI.

Moses said to God, "Suppose 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?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'

- Moses ANTICIPATED that the Israelites would doubt him.
 - For CENTURIES Israel **hadn't seen God do anything**. For CENTURIES Israel hadn't heard His voice.
 - For CENTURIES Israel was surrounded by people who worshipped other gods.
 - Odds were great that they would **struggle to believe in the God** of their ancestors.
 - He has been MIA for centuries.

- Moses wanted to be clear about **what God was sending him** back to the palace of the Pharaoh.
- Before this moment God revealed Himself to His ancestors with different names.
 - **ELOHIM** (God most high) mentioned in **Genesis 14**.
 - **El Shaddai** (God Almighty) mentioned in **Genesis 17,28,35,43,48**.
 - **El Roi** (The God who sees me) mentioned in **Genesis 16**.
- God answered: אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (*ehyeh asher ehyeh*) – I am who I am.
- **I AM** means all of the names above. And more.
- **I AM** means that God is not defined by human understanding or philosophies or ideas.
- **I AM** means that He is more than that.
 - He is **self-existent**: He is not created. He is the source of everything.
 - He is **eternal**: present in the past, present and future.
 - He is **unchanging**.
 - He is **faithful** – reliable and true to his promises.

God also said to Moses, “Say 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, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.”

- Moses is not sent by an **unknown God**. He is sent by the ONE TRUE GOD—the God the Israelites have known since the very beginning of creation.
- The **God of their history**.
- God reveals His personal covenant name to Moses: **JHWH**.
- **JHWH** is used more than 6800 times for God in the Old Testament.

PROMISE: In God we trust – not our abilities.

⇒ GOD UNDERSTANDS our **doubts** and **feelings of inadequacies**. He allows us to question Him. But his presence is our solution.

God's sufficiency overcomes our inadequacies.

⇒ God is saying to you today: 'You may not be enough, but I AM.'

⇒ Moses wasn't anyone special or super talented. He didn't have any special gifts or abilities.

➤ But God called him.

➤ God equipped him.

➤ God used him.

If you ask why we should obey God, in the last resort the answer is, 'I am.' To know God is to know that our obedience is due to Him.

C.S. Lewis

- It is so easy to use **our circumstances as an excuse** – too busy at work, struggling with an illness, going through a divorce, buckling under financial pressures.
- It is easy to be obedient in **the areas where we are in control** with our skills and resources and talents and opportunities. Being obedient in spaces that comes naturally.
- Moses' story challenges us to be open to move into spaces beyond my abilities.
- **To rise above our circumstances and our challenges.**
- To say yes to God even if it seems crazy...or impossible...or dangerous.
- When we accept God's call. When we answer with obedience.
- God works **in and through** us!
 - God **calls you.**
 - God will **equip you.**
 - God will **use you.**