



**Series:** Exodus: Out of Egypt

**Date:** February 27, 2022

**Speaker:** Spence Shelton, Lead Pastor

**Text:** Exodus 3

**Title:** God is \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction

I know many of you, like me, have been paying attention to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. What I want to ask you to do is pray for the church there. And if you can give, give financially to the church there. Give to the Ukrainian Baptist Theological Seminary who has turned their classrooms into shelters for people displaced by the bombing. Their president said this week “The church did not forget what it means to be persecuted. We will rearrange, reorganize, and do what we always do; preach the gospel.” The pastor of Irpin Bible church near Kyiv, Vasyl Ostryi, said in a post on the gospel coalition “If the church is not relevant at a time of crisis, then it is not relevant in a time of peace.” So, he his wife and 4 children are staying to serve. They’ve announced a week of fasting and

prayer. His church is about the size of Mercy. They’ve trained their members in first aid and are preparing to be servants to their countrymen. Let’s pray for this church and the believers in Ukraine. Because by praying we commit them to a God who is able.

### PRAY

Exodus 3. Last week we met Moses. We looked at major milestones in Moses’ life. And many my community group had AWESOME discussion about the milestones we’ve experienced in our lives, and I heard from several group leaders you had great discussions as well. I was having dinner Friday night with our Mercy Northeast Group Leaders and man clearly God is doing a work through our groups there. And part of that is just recognizing his past faithfulness.

**Last week we met Moses, this week - Moses meets God. And we meet God with him.** You can simply title this sermon

**Exodus 3: God Is \_\_\_\_\_**

Big idea of exodus is that the most important thing in your life is what you think about God!

It’s not your race or your political views or your marital status or your financial status or whether you are a dog person or cat person, whether you are green or blue bubble in the text...The most important thing in your life - the thing that actually shapes EVERYTHING ELSE - is what you think about God.

And we are going to fill in the blanks with who he reveals himself to be here in Exodus 3. But this is not just some lecture on the nature of God. The purpose of this sermon is to help us



experience in some measure what Moses experienced - A radical reorientation of his whole life based entirely on seeing God for who he really is.

And what makes this encounter with God SO helpful for us, is that Moses reacts to God much like we tend to react to God. God appears to Moses in a burning bush...audibly SPEAKS to him & gives him a purpose for his life...and STILL Moses is gonna be focused on himself and his ability to perform the task God gives him. **Which is like riding a roller coaster and wondering if you have the skill to get to the end of the ride.** YOU cannot make the roller coaster go. You have no power. Your only job is to just put your harness down and hold on for the ride of your life.

Well, in many ways this is what we are like with God. We get so focused on ourselves. We forget apart from God we can really do nothing. So, we grip things in our lives really tightly. Like our kids, our careers, our friends...and we think IT'S UP TO US to make things work out. Sometimes we try to get things in motion that we have no power to move.

And Moses in our passage today is going to go so far as to think his GOD-GIVEN ASSIGNMENT hangs on HIS ability. He's focused on himself. Just like we are.

And what we will see is God patiently and lovingly shifting Moses' focus off of himself and onto God. What God is going to show Moses today is that the most important thing in Moses' life - is going to be what he thinks about God.

So today we will go with Moses and meet God. Where God tells Moses about the ride he's gonna take him on. **God is going to say stop looking at you, and instead Look AT ME.** And draw your confidence from who I AM. So, we are likewise going to lift our eyes up to see who GOD IS. And draw confidence that THIS God is the God who has focused his love, power, and purpose onto us.

We'll go through all of chapter 3 just like we did last week. And I'll stop along the way to show you who God is.

**1** 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.

The fact that Moses is shepherding shows that a real humbling has happened in his life. An Egyptian royal would NEVER be caught shepherding. And he's not even shepherding his own sheep. He's shepherding someone else's sheep. He's an assistant shepherd. That's a part of his story. Riches to rags. I told you guys' last week before God will use Moses he will humble Moses. And it's a reminder to you that if you feel like you've taken a step or 3 back...maybe that's God's grace in humbling you for what he wants to do THROUGH you.

**2** Then 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. **3** So Moses



thought, "I must go over and look at this remarkable sight. Why isn't the bush burning up?" **4** When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

Whoever this is - KNOWS HIS NAME. Oh man remember last week how the last words of exodus chapter 2 were that God knew? God knew the Israelites by name and God knew Moses by name. He **knew**. He knows you by name too. Before you know him, he knows you. In fact, the Psalms say he knew you before the foundations of the earth and created you in your mother's womb. He knows the number of hairs on your head, and he knows the deep desires of your heart.

"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." **6** Then 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.

First thing Moses learns about God. The very first thing he learns is

### **GOD IS HOLY**

EVEN the ground around this burning bush is so holy that Moses needs to take off his shoes as a form of reverence. The word Holy means set apart and sacred. God is not ordinary or commonplace. The fire reminds us he isn't fragile either. No, his holiness is actually a danger to

mortals who trifle with it. That's why in verse 4 the Lord WARNS Moses. Watch out...you better not get any closer. He's a FIRE. In fact, this fire is actually a little subpoint to God is holy. God is FIRE. not like emoji fire that means he's super cool. But more in the burning hot flame kind of way. He reveals himself as fire throughout scripture. Whether it's all the moments from here Abraham to Daniel & Ezekiel where God comes to his people in Fire, or to John in the NT who sees Jesus as one with eyes of fire, the purifying nature of fire gives the appropriate understanding to us of his holiness.

All of this leads the writer of Hebrews in the New Testament to pull back and conclude his treatise on who God is by saying simply our God is a consuming fire. The reason I spend time on the fire is to awaken us to the fact that his holiness is POWERFUL and uncommon. Jackie Hill Perry in her book "Holier than thou" gives a helpful response to God's holiness when she says *Treating God like He's ordinary might be a natural response when we're ignorant to who God has revealed Himself to be. Even with Moses, if he wasn't told not to come near, he would have. He had to be instructed on how to approach God, to not come too close, to remove his shoes and respect the sanctified ground underfoot. The Lord's prayer begins in such a way that if one decided to let it sit on the mind for a bit, one might choose not to say anything at all. "Our Father in heaven,*



*hallowed [holy] be your name.” Around Him, the seraphim refuse to look. Before him, Isaiah confessed. Seeing him, Isaiah fell on his face. In front of him, John fell at his feet like a body does once the soul leaves.*

HE's HOLY! Do you approach him that way? I believe this is something we are just beginning to recapture in our day. Our previous generation in the church worked hard to reveal how accessible God is. And that is good. Because he is accessible to us in Christ & we can approach the throne of grace. BUT if we are not careful, we can get casual with that access and forget that the throne of grace is a THRONE. On which the king of kings sits. And we come to him as servants. We must continue to recover the holiness of God in our church and in our homes. We must recover reverential awe. And as we go through that process of humbling ourselves before a holy God...God will begin to work a fresh in us. I believe it. He is Holy.

ASIDE - Now I know what some of you are thinking - Why doesn't God do this kind of thing now? I mean if he appeared in a burning bush and gave me instructions for my life...then I would follow him. Humbly let me give you a few reasons to not look for a sign

1. **Seeing a sign wouldn't make you believe.** Even biblical history, even Moses' own story, shows us that the human heart is not in need of signs, it's in

need of salvation. God isn't going to WOW you into his kingdom. He might get your ATTENTION...and maybe some of you have experienced him getting your attention. But the only way he gets your heart is through his spirit coming to you and bringing you from death to life.

2. **Jesus condemns those who hunt for signs.**

Matthew 16.4 he condemns the Pharisees for seeking signs in order to believe saying “an evil and adulterous generation looks for a sign.” That's wanderlust. That's experience craving. You want to experience something...but that doesn't mean you want to give your life to it. And for real, if Jesus condemns it...I would discourage you from chasing it. Jesus says blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

3. **YOU HAVE A WORD FROM GOD - BIBLE!** The

Bible is God's revelation of himself to you. In Fact, Peter says in 2 Peter 1 that even though he walked with Jesus...and even though he was on the mountain of transfiguration when Jesus talked with Elijah and Moses and when God audibly spoke. **EVEN THOUGH I WAS THERE... you know what he says? “We have the prophetic word, more fully confirmed, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”**



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In other words, the Bible is your burning bush. The Bible is God's revelation of himself. The Bible is living and active. The Bible is the word of God to you saying SON, DAUGHTER...I made you, I love you, I paid your ransom for your sin with my firstborn son on the cross. And if you will come to me I will give you new life and I will be with you until I bring you home to be with me.

**7** Then 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, **8** and 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. **9** So because the Israelites' cry for help has come to me, and I have also seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them, **10** therefore, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

This is God saying to Moses what we the reader know from the end of Chapter 2. God knew. And now GOD speaks his plan to deliver them. He says where they are going. And he says what is going to happen and how. In fact, let me go ahead and read you what God says to Moses a few verses later. He explains the coming events in detail. Vv 16-18 he says ya'll will go together to have a

conversation with the king of Egypt and you'll ask him to let you go so you can worship me.

**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.

God is saying I know. I knew, and I know. I know what the king of Egypt thinks and feels. And I know how its gonna go down. That's because as Proverbs 21.1 says - A king's heart is like channeled water in the Lord's hand, he directs it wherever he pleases. Here's what I want you to see from vv 7-10 & 16-22.

### **God is SOVEREIGN**

Sovereign means he is actively and completely in control over the people and events in the world. And because his character is GOOD...it isn't just logical that we submit to him...it is very GOOD for us! If he is fully in control, then all of his promises are guaranteed to come true. And his promises are good for us!

As R. C. Sproul notes, "*If there is one single molecule in this universe running around loose, totally free of God's sovereignty, then we have no guarantee that a single promise of God will ever be fulfilled.*" There are no limits on what he controls. Thus, whatever he wills, he does.



Now sometimes the response to this reality of God is - what about my free will? Yes, the lord grants you agency. That's clear. We are not robots. He wants us to turn to him & follow him of our own accord. But often when we ask about free will...**I think our hearts are asking...what about MY sovereignty.** MY control. So, the better question that will reveal your what's going on in your heart is - how committed are you to the myth of your own sovereignty? He is sovereign. Not you.

Ok I want to come back to vv 11 - 15 now.

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

Does anybody else resonate? God, you want me to go where? To Pharaoh? Who am I? Which is funny because if Moses had thought for just a second, he would have remembered that God called him BY NAME from that bush. He knows Moses. But this is the exchange I was telling you about. This is how we often respond to God's call. GOD - DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM? I'm nothing, I'm nobody. In fact, God you know my past. You know I'm a fugitive. You know I'm old.

Some of you think the same thing. How could God possibly send ME to tell my neighbor about Jesus? Ya'll the only reason we won't QUADRUPLE the number of baptisms we see this year - is because we are too caught up asking God the same question Moses did. God says

I'm sending you to your neighbor. And we say, "Who am I?" I'm sending you to your co-workers - "Who am I?" I'm sending you to your CHILDREN, to your Wife, to your husband, to your parents, to your friends, to the homeless, to the orphan, to the afghan refugee - GOD IS SOVEREIGNLY SENDING HIS PEOPLE AMONG LOST PEOPLE AND ALL WE CAN THINK IS "WHO AM I?" He's got a wonderful ride for us, and we are like...HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO MOVE THIS ROLLER COASTER? I DON'T THINK I CAN DO IT. I'm an enneagram BLAH BLAH - that's not me. And how does God answer Moses?

**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 <sup>at</sup> God at this mountain."

God doesn't encourage Moses by pointing out Moses' strengths. NO. HE DOESN'T TALK ABOUT MOSES AT ALL. He says I WILL BE WITH YOU! JUST HOLD ON TIGHT! God is Sovereignly in control & this is good for us. IT's the same thing Jesus says to his disciples. Go make disciples and I will be WITH YOU to the end of the age. That's not some sentimental "we are with you." No this is a CHARACTERISTIC OF WHO GOD IS.

God is **IMMANENT**

This is the theological term for God being present with us. He is IN us. Not imminent like "it's about to happen." Not that. Immanence describes how he is present with his



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people. Ephesians 4.6 - he is IN all things. He is in us. He is holding all things together because he's right here. YES, he is also transcendent existing outside of the world and yes, he is omnipresent - everywhere at all times. But scripture also says he is CLOSE to us. It's like a relationally close proximity also marked by physically close as well. Do you know how insane this is? God being with you? God is WITH you.

**13** Then Moses asked God, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors 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. 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 ancestors, 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.

For those of you newer to the bible this is a VERY big statement. The "I AM" statement. This is God introducing the name he is still known by. Whenever you see an all-caps version of the word "LORD" in your bible - It's referring to this name. The name there is YAHWEH.

**I AM = YHWH**

We say "YAHWEH" cause we don't speak Hebrew and need some vowels. But this is the name. It is the I AM. This

became the HOLY sacred name of God to his people and warrants the same reverential awe in us. Here's what he's saying.

**God is ETERNAL**

He says this is my name FOREVER. That's because he is FOREVER. "He is Free to act within time as he wills, but he exists outside of it. He is simultaneously the God of the past, present, and future, bending time to his perfect will. The past holds for him no missed opportunity. The present holds for him no anxiety. The future holds for him no uncertainty. He was, and is, and is to come." He simply is I AM. And he is not only eternal, he is UNCHANGING

**God is UNCHANGING**

And the importance that God is the same God from eternity past present and future is that the God you are reading about with Moses... he says he's the same God that was the God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob. And the same God of His ancestors will be the SAME to Moses and the SAME to Ruth & Boaz, to Esther & Mordecai, to Nehemiah & Ezra, to Isaiah & Jeremiah, to SAUL & DAVID. And when Jesus comes in the flesh he is the SAME God that was with Moses. And he's the SAME God to the early church and RIGHT NOW he is the exact same God that he was to Adam & EVE. He's UNCHANGING in his power, his Love, his patience, and his purpose for you.



You and I? We change all the time. We change our minds & hearts & desires CONSTANTLY. BUT GOD - he is I AM. Always. Which means regardless of what kind of performance you've had this week. Regardless of whether you've been a great husband or a lazy one. Regardless of whether you read your bible every day or never cracked it open...HE hasn't changed. If this is your first time in church in 30 years. I have incredible news - he hasn't changed. Everything else has. Pastor isn't wearing a suit, we've got drums, you can give online...but the God we serve HAS NOT CHANGED! His LOVE FOR YOU HAS NOT CHANGED! HIS BEAUTIFUL GOSPEL HAS NOT CHANGED! And that doesn't mean we presume on his love. Doesn't mean we take his love for granted. It means our response to our own sin is to RECEIVE his love again and walk forward in full acceptance found in repentance and faith in Christ. In fact, that leads me to the final thing about God

### **JESUS is God**

There is a powerful moment where Jesus is confronting some of the Jewish leaders and they are arguing about who Jesus is. They think he is a madman possessed by a demon. Recorded in John 8 Jesus says  
56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad." 57 The Jews replied, "You aren't fifty years old yet, and you've seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to

them, "Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." -- John 8:56-58

He's calling back to when God introduced his holiest of names - YAHWEH. And he's saying I AM. That's Me. And for those of you who have religion professors or skeptical friends who say, "Jesus never claimed to be God..." YES, HE DID. ALL the time, but this right here is the definitive. And the way you know that is the next verse in John. They picked up stones to stone him. Because in their mind he's blaspheming. But it's not blasphemy, it's God in the flesh! Think about Everything we just said about God

**Jesus is Holy** - John the Baptist is going to say he's not even worthy to tie his sandals. The Demons shudder and flee in his presence because they KNOW he's God and they will be consumed by him. So, they beg for mercy and flee. And that holiness means he is WORTHY of your worship. He's worthy of whatever it costs to follow him. The author of Hebrews tells us that when Moses makes the decision to obey God...to go get God's people. He does so because he considered - this is gonna sound crazy...

For he considered reproach for the sake of Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, since he was looking ahead to the reward. -- Hebrews 11:26

For the sake of Christ!? What God is saying here is that the "reward" of the promised land would not be the complete fulfillment of God's promise of deliverance. But





one day full deliverance would come in the form of Christ! The Messiah delivering God's people once and for all from bondage to the enemy and the promised land would be eternity with him in his kingdom. And WHATEVER reproach...whatever humiliation...whatever BATTLES he would endure...CHRIST was worthy of it all.

And here we sit having the gospel and we can join Moses & join the elders around the throne in Revelation 4-5 and say WORTHY IS THE LAMB! DO YOU see him as HOLY!? As WORTHY of your worship? Because if you do, everything changes. You stop looking at yourself!

**Jesus is Sovereign** - The winds & the waves do what he says. Luke 8 - a guy named Jairus has a daughter who is dying from an illness. Jesus is rushed to her to save her just in time...ONLY he stops to perform a miracle of mercy on a chronically ill woman. And while he does, the girl dies. And Jesus KNEW that would happen. And when the report comes in that the girl has died, he locks eyes with Jairus and says don't be afraid, only believe. Because just like God knew at the end of Exodus 1, JESUS KNEW.

Jesus is sovereign still over your life. Which means you can trust him.

**Jesus is Immanent** - The miracle of God becoming man and walking among us is so great we celebrate it every year for a month. HE is Emmanuel. God WITH us. And that didn't stop. He said Matthew 28 - I am WITH YOU to the end of the age.

**Jesus is Eternal** - In Genesis 1 God says "let us make man in our image. Why is God talking about himself in the plural? John 1.1-2 tells us. He was with God in the beginning and through him all things were created. And when you read Revelation, he's there seated on the throne for the rest of eternity. **Satan could not turn him, ministry could not tire him, the grave could not hold him. Time itself cannot contain him. He IS GOD.** So, when Jesus says he "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." That is ACTIVE. Because he is ALIVE AND ACTIVE. Which is why there is POWER here.

**Jesus is Unchanging.** The author of Hebrews says. **8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. - Hebrews 13:8**

The love of Christ directed towards you - It's always there. He never wavers when you do. No, he is the same. His love is the same. And the purpose of Exodus is to widen your eyes to the Christ even Moses, who was just looking ahead without certainty - even he considered Christ worthy to risk his reputation & his life for. And it's to tell you he's worthy.

TURN TO HIM TODAY.