

# ***God Sees, God Knows, God Acts***

Exodus 2:23-3:22

3.5.2017

**BIG Idea: When we get a bigger view of God it changes our perspective on everything.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

- A few years ago, Teresa and I had the opportunity to visit Yosemite Valley in California. I had seen pictures like this one **(on Screen)** many times. We heard that it was a great place to visit but we were not prepared for the real scale of the features in the valley. When we got down into the valley we began to feel so small. Many of the walls along the edge of the valley are 2000' tall. The one on the left here is El Capitan and is 3000 feet tall. The cute little waterfall on the right is only 617 feet tall. Being in the valley and experiencing the scope is awesome in the truest sense of the word and it changes our perspective on that place for the rest of our life. Never again will we look at a picture like this and think of it simply as a nice scenic place to visit. No... Yosemite is awe-inspiring.
- Believe it or not this may be the greatest need any of us have today. Not in relation to Yosemite but to God. What if all of those feelings we have in life are simply meant to be clues to how we feel when we get a glimpse of the true God? Rather than coming with our pre-conceived notions of the God who is nice to visit and helpful to hang out with, we are absolutely floored simply by his awesome presence and power.
- This is what we see in our passage today. Moses was going to lead an entire nation out of slavery to the most powerful man in the world at that time and he wasn't ready. God was real to him but he needed to stand at the foot of El Capitan and get a sense of reality. He needed a bigger view of God and when he did, it changed his perspective.
- To get us up to speed real quick on the story... Last week we saw Moses was born as part of the Hebrew people, who were slaves in Egypt under Pharaoh. He oppressed them but actually feared them so he condemned all the newborn boys to death but through the faith of his mother and God's amazing providence, had been raised by his mother and then in Pharaoh's house. When he had grown up one day he ended up murdering an Egyptian just to protect one Hebrew. It ended up the Hebrews didn't see him as the deliverer and circumstances required he flee Egypt for the wilderness where God worked in his life to prepare him to go back and lead his people to freedom.
- 40 Years had gone by and Moses had settled in to life in Midian but God was not done with him. Moses was going to take on one of the biggest rescue missions in history. Moses was going to see God move through all of the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and as a fire on top of a mountain giving the Law, but before Moses could lead God's people through all of that, Moses needed to experience God himself. He needed to getting a bigger view of God so he knew God could do what he said he was going to do.
- The BIG Idea for today is: We need a bigger view of God. When we get it, our perspective on everything changes. It helps us see who we are, what life is really about, and it helps us see our problems, challenges, and hopes in a new light. See God for who he is has a way of re-orienting our lives in significant ways. We are only going to do a 40,000 flyover of who God is. He is much bigger. Its like spending 10 minutes in Yosemite Valley. Everything you see is true and right but you can't possibly take it all in. I have a 900 page book on my shelf called, "The Doctrine of God" by John Frame. Brilliant but Frame would say he is giving more a survey than an exhaustive look.
- As I was preparing this sermon, it was my prayer for you, that God would give you a bigger view of

himself today and it would carry into your entire week.

- We see 5 facets of God's greatness in this passage today...

### **1. God's covenant faithfulness**

- 2:23-24 is bridge between last week's picture of Moses in the wilderness and the picture of Moses encountering God at the burning bush.
- These verses highlights God's covenant faithfulness which is his promise relationship to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And a few verses later in 3:6 God identifies himself to Moses as "*the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*" Then down in v.15 he tells Moses to tell the Israelites that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob has appeared to you.
- 3x's God brings his covenant faithfulness to mind. He is basically saying, "hey, remember that promise I made 100's of years ago to your ancestors? I'm the God who made it and the God who will keep it."
- How great is it when you have a friend who makes a promise to always be there for you in a situation and they come through for you? Even greater still is a friend who does so over your entire friendship with them. Day in and day out you know you can count on them. That kind of friend is rare, but how much more substantial is a God who makes a promise and never, ever will fail to keep it.
- This is God's covenant faithfulness and it is one of the most common characteristics of God given in Scripture. Now, what exactly is a covenant?
- One of the best definitions I've come across is actually in *The Jesus Story Book Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones: "A never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love."
- Moses needed to get a glimpse of God's covenant faithfulness and we need the same thing. Knowing that God doesn't change the way he feels about you EVER, frees you from fear, from wondering if God will come through in the end for you.
- We see his covenant faithfulness most clearly in Jesus, who came to solve our problem with sin once and for all. We talked about it a few weeks ago but Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham's offspring.
- City on a Hill actually exists as a sign of God's covenant faithfulness. We need to see God's covenant faithfulness more clearly. But secondly, we need to see...

### **2. God's holiness**

- Moses' experience with God is unique in Scripture. 3:1ff he encounters a burning bush that isn't consumed. V.2 tells us that it was the angel of the Lord showing up in the bush. This angel shows up throughout the OT and is not a mere being but the presence of God himself. Many scholars believe this is the pre-incarnate Jesus.
- So God speaks to Moses and tells him to take his shoes off. This is a strange request. Theories and speculations but there is only one clear point here: Moses wasn't able to just enter God's presence without adjustment. He needed to take his shoes off to begin to grasp that what was happening was not normal. He was encountering a holy God.
- What is holiness? "Holiness is then God's capacity and right to arouse our reverent awe and wonder. It is his uniqueness, his transcendence. It is his majesty for the holy God is like a great King whom we dare not treat like other persons." -John Frame
- God is NOT like us. He is so different than us that there is literally nothing we can point to and say "God is like that but only more so..." God is infinitely great and unique and even his name reveals this.
- Moses encountered God's holiness physically but also a few verses later in v.13-14 *Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to*

*you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.'"*

- If you are new to church this is one of the single most important statements about God in the entire bible. He says, "my name is I am." I know you may be thinking, that this is not a great name but it is the perfect name for God. God is the only being in the universe that is not contingent on anyone or anything else. He doesn't need anything and in fact, as Paul says in Romans 11:36 – *"For from him and through him and to him are all things."* Every thing you see in this moment and will see every moment of every day of your entire life is dependent on the great I AM but he is dependent on nothing and no one.
- You see, in our sin, we each live as if we are the point. We say in our hearts, "I am" but we are just tiny little finite, dependent "I ams" but there is only one true "I am" and I am not him. Louie Giglio, the director of the Passion College movement once wrote a book on this called "i am not but i know I AM."
- One of the most liberating things a person can do in life is embrace God as the Great I AM. It liberates us from trying to be little "i ams" controlling, worrying, stressing, manipulating, losing sleep, and exhausting ourselves trying to be something we can't possibly ever be.
- You all know how much I appreciate CS Lewis. A member this week posted on my Facebook page an article from the Babylon Bee, a Christian satirical website: "Congregation Sees Pastor's C.S. Lewis Quote Coming From A Mile Away" <http://babylonbee.com/news/congregation-sees-pastors-c-s-lewis-quote-coming-mile-away/>). So, I'm guessing you saw this one coming...
- "In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that –and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison — you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you."
- Moses needed to see God was NOT like him. That God is completely different and absolutely holy but he also needed to know...

### **3. God's character - compassion**

- We get an awesome glimpse into the character of God, specifically his compassion, in this passage.
- Back in 2:22-23 *During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.*
- Look at that for a moment: Israel cried out... *God heard, God remembered, God saw, and God knew.* God is not just holy and transcendent. He is not just a God who is high and lifted up and far off, he is a God who is near. He is a God who knows his people. In the OT, the verb "know" is not simply to know information but always includes the context of an intimate, personal relationship. You could say God feels for his people. He knew every one of his people in Egypt and the condition of each.
- For some of you today, this may be the most important thing I will say. God hears your cries. He hears the cries deep in your heart, in your moments of weakness, in your moments of doubt, when you feel like no one in this world hears you. God hears.
- He hears in a way that we don't. Every person in this room hopefully prayed at the same time for Jessie. God wasn't like, "Hey, wait a second, I think I got most of you but there were 3 or 4 of you I missed." No he heard us all equally.
- He is not distracted like we are. We don't hear well do we when more than one thing is going on, do

we?

- ILL - Couples: how many times has your spouse been watching Netflix or something on their phone and you are trying to get your attention but they just don't seem to hear? Parents: How many times have you had to call your kids name while they were doing something? Parents: How many times have you been watching TV or doing something online and your kids are trying to get your attention but it goes something like this: mom mom mom mom mom mom mom and finally they have to call you by your first name to get your attention?
- God had heard and had compassion on his people. This is God pulling back the veil for Moses and letting him see God's compassion. The road ahead was going to be tough and Moses was going to face some moments of struggle and doubt so he needed to know that God was not just holy and exalted, but compassionate and near to the hurting.
  - vv.7-8 *Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey"*
  - God sees how sin has afflicted us. We are powerless in the face of sin and under the weight of our guilt. As we suffer in this broken world and experience the affects of the fall both in us and around us, God is compassionate.
  - One of the markers of Jesus' ministry on earth was compassion. He felt for those who were broken and hurting. He was God walking with the hurting.
  - Today, whatever you are facing, you have a compassionate heavenly Father. He hears you. He sees you. He knows you. You can come to him knowing he cares for you.
  - As great as God's compassion is, it is NEVER mere sentiment. It is one thing for someone to have compassion on you where you are but it can only go so far. Someone who has the ability to rescue you is infinitely better. That brings us to our 4<sup>th</sup> facet of God...
- 4. God's mission** - connecting the Genesis promises to the Exodus mission
- His compassion is not mere sentiment but the sovereign love of a holy God. God's compassion ALWAYS acts. It is an aspect of his covenant faithfulness.
  - And God would get it done! 40 years earlier Moses had gone out to "looked on" the burdens of his people (2:11) and tried to deliver but NOW, God had "looked upon" the Israelites and deliverance would truly come.
  - Hundreds of years earlier in Genesis God had promised to Abraham to give his descendants the land of Canaan and that then to Jacob that his people would be in Egypt 400 years but they would be led out and into the promised land.
  - God's mission was about to go into full effect. He rolls it out for Moses in vv.16ff to know what God is up to. God has seen what has happened. He is going toe-to-toe with Pharaoh, who claimed to be God, and the true God was going to win. God was going to lead his people out of Egypt after displaying his power by defeating Pharaoh through signs and wonders. This idea of God leading his people out of Egypt with an outstretched arm and signs and wonders is a recurring theme throughout the OT and it begins here.
  - Missional language is all over this text – 5x's a variation of the word send is used. God has a mission and he pulls back the veil to tell Moses how it is going to go down. Mission is not something arising from the heart of God's people. Mission is fundamentally an attribute of God as revealed in Scripture and history.
  - Moses needed to understand God's mission: To redeem himself a people to be a holy people set apart to know him and walk with him.

- God is doing this even today in our midst. This is one of the reasons we hold the Alpha course. We believe it is a way we can join God on his mission to redeem men and women out of the power of sin and into the kingdom of Christ.
- Moses needed to understand God's mission and finally he needed to know...
- 5. God's methods** - uses weak vessels to accomplish his great purpose
- God could have done everything he tells Moses without Moses being involved. God didn't NEED Moses but he commissions Moses to be a part of the mission. God delights in using weak vessels like us to bring about his mission in this world.
- Moses does what we often do and begin to make excuses. vv.11-12a *But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"* Moses was looking at himself and wondering, "how in the world can I do that???" But he was missing the point. God reminded him, *"But I will be with you..."*
- When you have encountered God, you have everything you need for the mission he calls you to. Some of you are afraid to embrace being on mission because you don't think you know enough or you aren't witty enough or that you will mess up or that you might drive someone away. BUT what is the focus of all of those issues? You. What does God do to Moses when he begins to doubt? He points Moses to himself: I will be with you.
- It's like you are going into a two on two basketball tournament anxious and worried about all the teams you will play when you have Lebron James on your team. Is it better to focus on your own weaknesses or the strengths of the other team, or just rest in the fact that Lebron could win the whole game by himself with you drinking Gatorade on the sidelines?
- God is saying, "Look to me, not to yourself. Know that this is my mission and I will get things done despite your weakness."
- 2 Corinthians 4:7 *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."*
- We'll talk a lot more about this next week but Moses needed to know that God's method is using imperfect vessels like him to carry out his perfect mission.

## CONCLUSION

- A.W. Tozer: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.
- It says, how we conceive God to be shapes us on the deepest and most profound levels. There is no shortage of people trying to grasp who God is and what he is like.
  - ILL – the new movie, The Shack, based on a book, is one man's attempt to grasp who God is while dealing with tragedy. There are elements of truth –like God's compassion but the story itself is riddled with pictures of God that are absolutely contrary to Scripture. The truth is we don't need a modern author or a movie to give us what we need to understand who God is. He has given us his Word but the focus of the entire story is Jesus.
  - Since Jesus is God, everything we ever need to know about God is found in him. It is no mistake that Jesus reveals himself as the Great I am:  
John 8:56-58 *Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."*  
*So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."*
  - To know and experience God more...
    - Ask God now... show yourself to me. I NEED to see you. I NEED to experience you and know you more than I need anything in this life.
    - Be in your bible.

- Surround yourself with people who will remind you of God.
- Look to Jesus – he is the perfect revelation of God

## COMMUNION

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\*\*\*Unless otherwise notes, all verses are taken from the *English Standard Version*, copyright 2000, Crossway Books; Material used from Logos Bible Software Platinum edition; *The Message of Exodus* by JA Motyer; *Exalting Jesus in Exodus* by Tony Merida.