

Moses – Exodus 3

If I were to ask this morning, *“How many of you are going through some sort of difficulty?”*, I wonder if anybody would NOT raise their hand. Is there anybody here, anybody in the world who would say, *“Everything about me is just right. I have enough money. I have good health. I have the perfect job and my spouse and my kids just adore me.”*? I doubt it.

Some people are going through some minor difficulties and some people are going through a horrible crisis right now. And if you aren’t going through some sort of difficulty, then buckle up because it’s coming. It’s just life. **Job** said, *“Man, born of woman, is of few days and full of trouble.”* (Job 14:1)

When trouble comes, it’s a natural reaction to ask God, “Why?” Some of you that are a little more mature Christians know that asking that rarely helps when you are in the middle of it. I don’t think God minds if you ask but I have found that He rarely answers like we want Him to and when we want Him to. But you can ask.

We want to know if God is punishing us for something or if He is just allowing this in our lives to teach us something. Maybe Satan is hammering on us or maybe we are going through difficulties as consequences of our own actions. Don’t ya hate that? Whatever it is, we want more details so we can get through it quicker, so we ask why.

This morning I don’t want to discourage you from asking why necessarily. I just want you to try wording it a little bit differently from now on. Maybe if we instead asked God, *“For what reason...”* I think that’s a little different than asking why. Instead of wanting to know what you did to deserve such horrible treatment, asking *“For what reason am I going through this?”* opens us up to what God’s will is for us in this difficulty. What am I supposed to learn? How am I supposed to change? What opportunities does this bring to make me more like Jesus? Those are better questions than just why.

If you will turn to **Exodus chapter three**, we will continue our look at the Old Testament saints by seeing who He was to Moses as Moses and his people were going through a great difficulty. There we see Moses being spoken to directly by God but through a burning bush. Most of you know the story but it is one of the best places in all of scripture to find out better who God is because Moses flat out asks Him who He is. And His response is fascinating but the whole story, while written nearly 4,000 years ago, is helpful, even vital to us today.

When Moses was born, God allowed Moses, a Hebrew, to be raised up in the house of Pharaoh with all the benefits of being basically the grandson of the most powerful man in all of Egypt. But when Moses was 40 years old, he killed a man who was beating up another man and had to run away to the far side of the country and live out in the sticks as a shepherd for his father-in-law. He went from the palace to living in a tent. He went from having slaves do his work to working with sheep. It was a boring, mundane and humbling job and God had him there for a reason.

But while the life of Moses might have been boring, his fellow Jews who were still in Egypt were going through a horrible crisis. They had been slaves for hundreds of years and their treatment was getting worse all the time. I'm sure they were asking God why and asking how much longer and begging for divine help. They were literally crying out for help from God...and God heard them and had a plan.

Let's read **Exodus 3:1-15** this morning and I want you to see the method God had for getting His will done and revealing Himself even while using a flawed and scared man like Moses. But it's also the same overall method God has for using you and revealing Himself to you as well, even though He probably won't use a burning bush with you.

Exodus 3:1-15 says, *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. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." 4 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." 5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 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. 7 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. 8 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. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12 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." 13 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?" 14 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.'" 15 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.*

I'm always amazed at people in the Bible who have any kind of encounter with God, whether it's some manifestation of God Himself or an angel or a vision or whatever, and they just carry on a conversation with Him like He's some guy they work with every day. Moses asks some good questions and brings up some important ideas and I'm afraid I would wet my pants and faint or something. I'd be more like Peter when he saw the transfiguration of Jesus. *"Hey, y'all wanna put up some tents? That'd be cool."*

But God wanted to speak to Moses so He took him way off into the wilderness. This is some backwoods country, banjo playing redneck land right here and there was not much to look at and not much to do

except watch the sheep eating what little grass was around, so God had the full attention of Moses. Have you ever been there?

I doubt any of us have been to exactly that spot on the map but I think most of us have been in a position where God has our full attention. Maybe you got sick or broke your leg or got put in jail. Maybe you just had a nice quiet vacation. Usually, it is pretty hard to hear God or for Him to get our attention when we are working 40 hours, come home to the wife and kids, we have hobbies and chores and Gunsmoke is on and the radio is playing and we have to check Facebook and blah, blah, blah.

It's not that we are ignoring God. We just have stuff to do; a lot of stuff and we want to hear from God but we...you know...life. That's when God says, *"Okay busy boy. It's time for you to take a break and listen to me for a while. I have something for you to do."* I think God showed great mercy to Moses. In fact, I'm jealous. When God wants my attention, He usually bonks me in the head, sometimes literally. But Moses got to see a burning bush that didn't burn up. How cool is that?

Now, I don't know how God made the bush burn but not burn up and I don't know how God spoke to Him or in what form God took but in studying this, I believe that Moses had what is called a Christophany. That means that it was the pre-incarnate (before He became a man) Jesus that was actually doing the speaking. I say that because that is usually what we see when the term "Angel of the Lord" or "Angel of God" is used in scripture.

But however it happened, Moses was in the presence of the Creator of the universe, God Almighty, King of kings and Lord of lords and, as such, God tells Moses to show Him reverence. Do you see that in **verse 5**? God said, *"Stop Moses! Don't come any closer and take off your sandals because where you are standing is holy ground."*

Now, first, what does the word "holy" mean? It means to be set apart for God. It is different, not common. So, why would God call that ground holy? What had happened there to make it holy? God was there. That's what made it holy. God is holy and where God is, that place is holy. It's not about the place. It's about God and when God gets your attention it's time to show Him reverence. That's what God was telling Moses and why he had to take his shoes off. It was an act of reverence.

So, what is reverence? How would you define it? The dictionary basically says it means respect but when we are talking about showing reverence for God, it means more than just respect. It means worship, to bow down, to adore and honor. It actually has an element of fear in it as well. That is exactly what was going on here and exactly what God expects of us when we encounter Him.

When God causes you to slow down and listen to Him, the first thing He expects is for you to revere Him, show Him the honor and awe and adoration He deserves. I truly believe that so many of us have to continue going through trials because we try to skip this part of God's method.

Job understood this. It was his first reaction when he went through the worst day of his life. After losing everything he owned and losing all ten of his kids, it says in **Job 1:20** that Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell to the ground in worship. Notice that it doesn't say Job understood why. It doesn't say that Job was not hurt. Job didn't say it was okay or that it was easy or anything else. In the

midst of more pain than hopefully any of us will ever have to go through, the first thing Job did was worship. He surrendered every part of himself to God and His plan.

Job didn't have a church to go to and he didn't have to. Worship can be done outside of these four walls. I'll agree completely with those that say you can worship on the golf course or in the deer blind or on a boat. You can. But in the depth of your great suffering and with God trying to get your attention, do you really think that is where you need to be to show Him the reverence that is due Him?

Are your golfing buddies going to mourn with you and pray with you and support you like your church family? One of the things I love about this church is that you don't have to pretend to be in a good mood when you are here. You don't have to put on a happy, pretty face. Don't insult us by trying that. Your family knows when you are hurting and we don't expect you to always be chipper as a squirrel. Life is hard and we are here for you if you need us and if you don't need our advice, we will be like Job's friends when they first saw him. You remember the story. They just sat on the ground with him and mourned with him without saying a word for a week. Good luck getting your golfing buddies to do that.

But going back to our story in Exodus, look what happens next with Moses. God explains to him that He has heard the cries of the Israelites and is going to send Moses to Pharaoh to set them free. Some people give Moses a hard time for all of his questions to God but I think they are fine questions. Moses wasn't saying he wouldn't go. He was just asking for some clarity.

You also have to realize that this early in world history, God had not revealed Himself to people like He has to us. Moses didn't have any scripture to go by, in fact, he would write all this down later so that we could have it to help us understand God's character and His ways and His heart.

This was also a land and culture of many so-called, little – g gods and Moses wanted to make sure he knew who he was talking to. So, Moses first asks God in **verse 11**, “*Who am I to go to Pharaoh?*” What he was asking was, “*What authority do I have?*” and God told Moses He would be with Him. Well, then Moses has to ask, not in doubt or a lack of faith but just because he didn't know, “*Who are you?*” What authority do you have?

I love the way God answers Moses. It is God's name. It is His character. It explains His history and His eternality. It is beyond complete comprehension and yet there are libraries full of books to explain it. It explains His power and sovereignty and makes His grace and mercy and forgiveness all the more incredible. It is a name and a phrase picked up and used by Jesus to explain who He was. They didn't understand how Jesus used it and we can't understand it completely either but it is enough! It is more than enough!

God revealed Himself to Moses in **verse 14** by saying, “**I AM WHO I AM.**” It might be translated Jehovah or Yahweh or simply “The LORD” but it has more meaning than you see at first glance. God is saying I am who I am, what I am and what I have been and will be. I am enough. I am more than you could ever ask or imagine. I am what you need me to be and I am unchangeable. You can not change me, scare me, threaten me or intimidate me. He says in **Revelation 1:8**, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*”

And I, Todd, am here to tell you based on my own experience that He is here today telling you that no matter what you are going through, no matter how hard or painful, boring or terrible, God's presence is enough! God's presence is enough! If you don't agree with that, it's okay for you to be wrong. Let God be true and every man a liar (Romans 3:4) because His presence is enough IS His name. It is His character and nature and He wants to reveal Himself to you like He revealed Himself to Moses and how He revealed Himself to Job as well.

It's this point in the message that you are expecting me to give you an illustration. It's what a good preacher would do but you're stuck with me and I struggled finding one example so I will give you several. He was with Abraham in **Genesis 21**. He was with Isaac in **Genesis 26**. He was with Jacob in **Genesis 28**. He was with Joseph in the pit, the palace and the prison. He was with David in **Psalms 23** where he says, *"I will fear no evil for you are with me."* He was with Mary in **Luke 1** where the angel told her, *"You are highly favored. The LORD is with you."* And what did Isaiah say that child would be called in **Isaiah 7:14**? Immanuel, which means, *"God with us."*

I could go on but there are too many. But I happen to know because I have heard the testimonies that God was with Billy in prison. God was with Cody in jail. God was with Belinda when she fell, with the Foresters when their grandson died, with Morris in the hospital and with me when my mother died and we can all testify today with the saints of old that God's presence is enough for whatever you are going through.

Maybe today God is trying to get your attention. In fact, no "maybe" about it. He IS trying to get your attention. He wants to speak to you in a still, small voice like He did with Elijah (1 Kings 19:12) but if that doesn't work and you still won't listen then He may just take you out to the wilderness to get your attention. He may use a burning bush or it may be something else, even something horrible that He allows so that you just stop and listen to Him. But He will not be ignored for long.

When that happens, it is immediately time to stop what you are doing. Stop with your plans and your ideas and what you think is best and just surrender all of you to all of Him in worship. When you do that, you too can find out that God's presence is enough for anything and everything that you are going through.

Call on Him today, right now. Stop with your plans and your other thoughts and dreams. Stop with what you want or think you need or even have to have. Go to God with open hands. Tell Him right now that you have nothing and are nothing without Him. Tell Him you surrender and you want what He wants. If that's not true yet just be honest and tell Him you **want to want** what He wants. Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief as the father said to Jesus in **Mark 9**.

Music

As the great I AM, God could force you to love Him and obey Him but He wants to have a relationship with you. In fact, that's why He created you. If you don't have that relationship today then you need to make that decision. None of us are guaranteed another breath and it is what we decide in this life that affects not only our peace and joy in this life but also our next life for all eternity.

Is God speaking to you today? I would love to pray with you about whatever it is if you need it. I would love to pray with you right now about your relationship with God or your lack of. If you don't have that relationship then just ask God to forgive you of all your many sins. Repent or turn away from that old lifestyle and give all those old desires to God right now in prayer. Allow Him to come into your life and change you from the inside out. That's the mark of a true believer.

I hear people claim to be Christians and followers of Jesus but their lives have not been changed. That's a huge red flag. Don't allow Satan to deceive you. When God is truly Lord of your life, He changes your heart and your mind and your behavior. If that's not obvious, then something is wrong. Let's pray about it right now as the music plays.