

Exodus 3:1-15

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Preacher: Clay Naylor

[0 : 00] Good morning. Open up your Bibles to Exodus chapter 3.! So whether it was planned or not, I don't know, but a lot of the songs and even what! Aletheia Way was focused on this morning is our topic today.

And how many of you are aware of your need for a great and glorious God today? And we're all in need of Him, and that never changes.

Just the awareness of our need increases, I hope, day by day, of how much we actually need God. And I hope that the message today encourages you. It really has me, and I'm not just kind of saying that because I'm filling in today.

But just a little introduction, like why should we listen? And we all need a great and glorious God, and we all sang that just a little while ago. And I hope that it was true as it came out of your mouth, and that you weren't singing nonsense or lies to God. You were genuinely aware of how great He is. So why listen to this message? But Tozer, in one of his books, said this, were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to this question, what comes into your mind when you think about God? We might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man.

Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God. And the weightiest word in any language is the word for God. Yeah, so the greatest thoughts we have, the mightiest thoughts we have are those that we think about the living God. Our beliefs concerning Him affect how we live in public and in private behind closed doors. How we manage our days, how we manage our time, what we do with our time is affected by how we view God. Not just our actions, but the motives behind our actions relate to how we view the person of God. And God cares about how we see Him. He cares about how we understand Him. He's not satisfied or okay with warped views of who He really is. I think for many of us, whether you're married or single, I think one of the greatest desires you have is you want to be understood. You want people to know you for who you really are.

[2 : 50] You hate it when people misunderstand something that you're doing and interpret it in a wrong way. You want to be understood. And it's no different with God. But understanding who He is can mean the difference between life or death. And many people in the world, even this morning, are committing idolatry because they're worshiping a God of their own imagination rather than the God of the Scripture and the God who says, I am this way and I won't be changed by your opinions of me.

And Jesus said in John 4 that it is possible to worship God in the wrong way. And so we should pay attention to this time. J.I. Packer in his book, Knowing God, he mentioned three things about how we think about God. He said, those who know God have great thoughts of Him.

So if we have a very small view of God, if we have a very puny view of God, it will affect our life. People who refuse to enlarge their view of God will be left in a very pitiful state.

A long time ago, during the Reformation, Luther said to Erasmus, your thoughts of God are too human. You think that He is just like us. You think that He behaves like us, acts like us, and you're wrong. So are your thoughts of God, even this morning, too human?

There's enough of the person of God to go around forever, like for our souls to feast on, and enough of God to fill our hearts and minds with awe and wonder for all eternity.

[4 : 44] High thoughts of God keep us humble, dependent, and obedient, and in awe to Him. David wrote concerning these things in Psalm 139, something I've really been reading a lot of lately.

He says, beyond reach and beyond our power, like to fully comprehend the person of God.

It transcends in a way that even we can't attain it, and even if we could, we wouldn't understand it. But don't misunderstand me. God can be known. He can be known. He can be understood.

That it is false to say that He can be fully and exhaustively known. The finite cannot fully contain the infinite. And that's where we find ourselves this morning, so it keeps us humble.

So those who know God have great thoughts of God. The second way, Packer said, those who know God have great boldness for God. If you truly know Him, if you've been brought near to Him by the blood of Christ, you can throw yourself recklessly into His mission, into His purposes.

[6 : 22] There's no need for fear at all. So many of us are timid about facing everyday trials in our lives, and facing anything that has been touched by sin.

We're afraid because we have a small view of our God, or we've lost sight of how big He truly is. So those of us who have an enormous, glorious view of God, we can face life without fear, and even death itself.

In Daniel chapter 11, verse 32, it says, But the people who know their God shall be strong, stand firm, and take action.

That phrase means to strive valiantly, or courageously prevail, or to stand firmly resolute. That's how understanding God really, truly is, can impact us.

Then lastly, he said, those who know God have great peace in God. Not a peace that the world gives, as Jesus says, but when we really understand God for who He is, our minds are possessed with such a strong assurance that anything could come our way, and we would be okay, not in our own strength, but in His.

[7 : 39] A relationship that we have that's guaranteed by the blood of Jesus, and His favor towards us. We have nothing to fear. Trials come.

Anything come. We're fine. So even death is welcomed at the end of the day, because we have a great peace in God. So, we cannot misunderstand who the person of God is.

And so just to catch a glimpse of this, we're going to look at Exodus 3 today, the encounter of Moses and God on Mount Sinai.

But just the background, Moses has fled the land of Egypt because he killed an Egyptian that he saw beating a fellow Hebrew. And he flees to the land of Midian, which is basically where modern Saudi Arabia is today.

And he kind of lives a very low-key life there, and is married to a Midianite woman, and lives in obscurity until he wanders to the base of Mount Sinai.

[8 : 49] So there, Moses, God experiences like the God of covenant faithfulness, and a great compassion to come and deliver his people from the bondage in Egypt.

It's a divine human encounter that we can learn a lot from. So he faces the person of God here, and in words that cannot be described, he is overwhelmed.

So let's read this together. Let's start in verse 1. It says, Let's read this together.

Let's read this together. Let's read this together. Let's read this together. Let's read this together.

Let's read this together. Let's read this together. Let's read this together. Let's read this together.

Let's read this together.

And he said, Here I am. Then he said, Do not come near. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.

[10 : 16] And he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt. And I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters.

I know their sufferings. I have come down to deliver them out of the land of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of the land to a good and broad land.

A land flowing with milk and honey to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

And now, behold, the cry of my people of Israel has come to me. And I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppressed them.

[11 : 14] Come, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?

He said, But I will be with you, and this shall be a sign for you that I have sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.

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. And they ask me, What is his name?

What shall I say to them? And God said to Moses, I am who I am. And he said, Say to this people of Israel, I am has sent me to you.

God also said to Moses, Say this to the people of Israel, 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.

[12 : 24] This is my name forever, and thus I am remembered throughout all generations. So, I'll stop there. If that's not enough for us to chew on for a little while.

So, in the Bible, names carry a lot more meaning than most people today in our culture seem to think about. In the Scripture, the name of a person signifies their character, their ability, their mission, especially when the name is actually given by God Himself.

So, example, Adam names his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living. And even greater example, the Son of God came into the world, and Mary was told, You shall call him Jesus, for he will save his people.

So, their names are connected to their mission. So, names have a lot of meaning. And in the Old Testament, we just read, I am who I am in Hebrew is the verb to be or to exist.

So, simply put, and this is overstating the simplicity of this more than likely, but simply put, God told Moses, I will be what I will be.

[13 : 45] I have always existed, and I will always exist. I just am. And we look in a lot of our English translations, there's a substitute word to throw in, the capital, all caps, L-O-R-D, LORD.

And in the Hebrew, when they read out loud, they would not read God's precise name, but substitute it with Adonai. Where they saw the four-letter word, Y-H-W-H, meaning Yahweh.

God's proper name in Hebrew, used around close to 7,000 times. A lot of emphasis there. That's three times as much as Elohim.

That's still a very significant name. And the aim of this was, God wants to show that he's not just a generic deity, that he wants to be known for who he actually is.

So, God's name carries his unique character and his mission. So, when God said this, when God said, I am who I am, we can somewhat derive a few things of what he actually meant when he said that.

[15 : 00] So, here's the first thing. What is God saying? What is God trying to communicate to us through his name? The first thing is, God is one.

God is one. This is also called in theological circles, the unity of God. But it means that the person of God is not divided into parts or sections.

In the old, there's several, I think two, old church catechisms and statements of faith that say, they call this the simplicity of God. Not saying that God is simple, meaning that he's small and unintelligent, but simple meaning like this is a simple device.

It's not complex. It doesn't have a lot of parts to it. So, it means that the person of God is not divided into parts or sections, but yet we can see different parts of God's character emphasized at different times.

God is all that he is all the time. Get your head around that statement. Write it down if you have to. God simply is all that he is all the time.

[16 : 20] And God reveals himself to us in such fullness that there can be nothing boring about him. So, let's unpack this a little bit. How do we relate this idea that God is one or God is simple to his attributes?

Those of us who have looked into this before, we know that we've chopped God up into his attributes, which is okay. I'll explain. But there's the incommunicable attributes, which means that we as human beings cannot relate to these attributes at all.

They're only divine attributes. Things like omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience. Those are things that we as humans have no idea about.

We can't touch them. Only the person of God possesses those attributes. And on the flip side, we have the communicable attributes.

Things like goodness, love, mercy. Those are things that we as humans can have some taste of in this life, though we don't perfectly experience all those things all the time, obviously.

[17 : 31] And how do we relate this to the idea that God is one? It means that every attribute of God is true of God all the time.

And to give you an example, those of you who do read your Bibles, unlike us, God is his attributes. God is love. He doesn't just occasionally act a certain way. He is those things. Example, God is love. 1 John 4.8 God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews 12.29 God is holy. Psalm 99.9 verse 9. So, when God demonstrates his love, he doesn't cease to be just and holy when he does that.

And how many of you do that when you read the scripture? You say, here God is displaying his love, but he is not being merciful. Or, here God is displaying his holiness, and so he can't be loving. [18:35] Y'all do that? Like, he just destroyed 3,000 people. So, this surely is just a demonstration of God's wrath and God's holiness. And I'm not telling you not to do that.

But, here's what you need to understand. In those situations, God did not cease to be one of his other attributes. Example, we read sections in the Old Testament where we see God judging the nation of Israel or judging other people groups and he, you know, annihilates a large number of them.

Well, in that moment, we're tempted to think in that he is just displaying his wrath. But, he didn't cease to be a loving God in that moment.

Let me explain. Is it a loving thing to allow sin and evil to flourish and to go on conquering the world? It's not.

So, God destroys it. So, in that same act, God was loving and he was just in the same act. Right? And, obviously, the greatest display of this is the cross.

[19:47] And we know that. So, when we're thinking about it, it means that God's attributes are so connected, so intertwined, that he's not separated.

his attributes are these little individual components that we bring together and that are held together by a divine superglue, if you would. They're not different components.

It means that God's goodness is his justice and his justice is his goodness. Get your head around that. So, we want to chop him up to understand him.

And why do we do that? It's probably because none of us can bear, like, on our soul all of who God is at one time. So, he accommodates us in terms of attributes.

He breaks himself down in order to show us who he is, which is such mercy on his part. He can't, we can't take all of him at one time.

[20:48] As he said later on to Moses in Exodus 33, when Moses said, show me your glory, Moses said, I will make, or God said, I'll make my goodness pass before you, but my face you cannot see.

No man can see me and live. So, I can show you my mercy and show you my goodness, but you can't fully take all of who I am. And so, you can't bear it on your soul or otherwise it would kill you.

So, every attribute of God is completely true of God all the time. It's so unlike us.

Augustine wrote, what is my God? What I ask but the Lord God. For who is the Lord but the Lord himself?

Or who is God besides our God? Lord God, you are stable yet not supported. Unchangeable yet changing all things.

[21:53] Never new yet never old. Making all things new yet bringing old age upon the proud and they know it not. Always working yet ever at rest.

Gathering but yet needing nothing. that's just a tiny picture again of just how great our God is. So, he has accommodated us.

He has broken himself down for us to understand in his grace. Kind of like how a ray of light comes through a window and we have to it breaks itself up into different colors so we can understand and see it.

Tiny example. that everything in the scripture from the tabernacle to the temple is some sort of prism of God showing us who he is. Breaking himself down for our finite minds to understand.

Job said, Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways and how small a whisper do we hear of him but the thunder of his power who can understand.

[23:04] God is one. That's one thing we can draw a conclusion from by God's name. Secondly, we know that God is saying I am eternal.

God is eternal. I am who I am. I will be what I will be. I am eternal meaning that he always has and he will always exist.

God said to the apostle John, I am the alpha, the omega, says the Lord God who is and who was and who is to come the almighty.

So the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet saying that the living God encompasses all things. He has no beginning and he has no end.

Again, he doesn't live in the confines of time like we do. He doesn't need a watch to understand what's happening in his universe. Successions of time are for us.

[24 : 09] He is not bound by time. He sees the past, the present, and the future as clearly as you and I see the present. It's all before him. He is eternal.

I am who I am. No one created me and no one has the power to do what I do. I exist. No one shapes my personality.

I have no beginning and I have no end. And Moses understood this. prayed in Psalm 90 verse 2, before the mountains were brought forth, or you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

So all of us will come and go as generations before us have, but God will remain. It's good. We can hang our hat on that.

God is not going anywhere. He is eternal. Thirdly, God is saying that He is, pick the word you want to use, unchangeable or immutable.

[25 : 17] The word, our God is unchanging. I am who I am. Connected to this is God saying I am unchangeable. I don't change. God forever remains the same in His nature, His person, His mission, His purposes, His promises, they all remain the same at all time.

That's such a comfort. It's just He's saying to Moses, I can't be anything other than what I am. I am God. Some of the old writers used to say this means that there is no potential in God.

He can't improve Himself. He can't pick up the slack and become something different. There's no potential in God. He fully fills His potential at all times.

He said in Malachi, I am the Lord and I do not change. There's no force or influence out here that can come against me and make me be different than who I am.

That's encouraging. We're not like that at all. We change daily. Our attitudes, our actions, our motivations. I'm sure many of us can say something like, do you remember so-and-so?

[26 : 35] She used to be such a kind and loving person, but when this tragedy happened, she became sad and angry and bitter. We change and not always for the good.

And as I said before, it isn't that God just has goodness and has justice. He is goodness and he is justice. So, thankful again in James 1-7, there is no variation or shadow due to change in relationship to God.

He promises to us that he remains the same. So we can take him at his word. When he says something, he is true. He's not going to change his mind. It's something that many of us are used to.

We're used to being deceived, lied to, and we've also deceived and lied to other people. But if God is unchangeable, his promises and his purposes, we can always rely on.

So, fourthly, when God says, I am who I am, we can clearly see that God is independent or self-existing.

[27 : 53] God doesn't need us or any other part of creation to be who he is. That's a misconception in our modern day. We feel like God created us because he was lonely or because he was bored or he needed something to do up in heaven.

Not so. And he gives Moses this, I guess, tiny, tiny example of the burning bush. And as it's saying, there's nothing I can provide for you by way of analogy to describe who I am and the very essence of my being.

God needs nothing, but we can enjoy him and we can glorify him and he delights in that. But this fire that was in the bush, we see that it was a very pure fire.

It wasn't made up of a lot of different compounds to make a fire. It just existed. No other energy sources. It just had energy in itself.

And God was, again, trying to give him just a picture of this is kind of how I am. And even just with that, Moses hid his face from God in that response.

[29 : 08] But we're messed up to think that God needs us. In Acts 17, the Apostle Paul, when he was in Athens, he said, the God who made the world and everything in it, being the Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served with human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

So, God exists freely and independent from any other part of his creation. So, from eternity past into eternity future, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit lived in perfect completeness, joy, and unity with each other.

Perfect satisfaction. If you glance later on, go back and look at John 17 that we preached through a long time ago, but Jesus prayed to the Father, God said, I'm praying for those whom you have given me, that they may be with me one day to see your glory, the glory that I shared with you before the world existed.

Such joy and completeness in the Godhead. So, God didn't create us out of some dependence, but out of an overflow, an abundance of his glory and excellence.

So, again, I've just been reading Augustine a lot lately for some reason, but he said, what would have been lacking in your goodness, God, which you yourself are, even if these things of creation had never existed and had remained unformed?

[30 : 59] You didn't create them out of any lack, but out of an abundance of your goodness. You ordered them and turned them toward form, but not because your joy had to be perfected by them.

Really incredible thought that though God doesn't need us, he created us, and he, it's good for us, he takes delight in us living for him. He can take delight in his creation, even though he doesn't need us.

So, I could go on and say that, what's that famous quote that we always throw up there, everything in the universe plugs into God, and if he shut down, there would be absolute nothingness.

He doesn't need us. And fifthly, and lastly, God is saying by saying, I am who I am, it's implying that God is the creator and sustainer.

He's the creator and sustainer, inexhaustible source of divine power and energy. That's what omnipotence means, all powerful, possessing all power.

[32 : 09] So, it isn't just that God has a lot of power, and then there's all these other small powers that exist outside of him. It means that he gives them power.

He delegates that power, and if he was to take it away, they would cease to exist. Christ. So, even the very breath that we breathe right now is a gift of God's sustaining power in our lives.

Every heartbeat, a gift of grace to us. In Isaiah chapter 40, God says, have you not known, have you not heard?

The Lord God, the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth, he does not faint or grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might, he increases strength.

So, God, by his own power, upholds all the universe and sustains us, and all energy, all power outside of that, finds its source, in him.

[33 : 20] He is the source of all power. So, he sustains us. Isn't that just crazy to think about, that you're going to walk out of here today by his sustaining power, that you're going to go on this week and do this or that because of his grace and his sustaining power.

He doesn't need to be recharged or backed up. He is the source of all our strength. So, those five things we can draw.

There may be more, but those things we can definitely see when God says, I am who I am. I will be who I will be. So, some application for us.

As we've been talking about, most all of us are aware of our need for a great and powerful almighty God. this journey probably began for me in 2006 when I was in the hospital in Atlanta and I received news that I was a lot sicker, more sicker, not the right phrase, that I was not doing as well as I thought I was.

they had been running some of my tests wrong. And so, I was about to go home. My bags were packed. I was getting ready to leave and my doctor came in and he pulled out the papers and he said, let me just look at something really quick.

[34 : 51] And he did some math and he showed me, like, they haven't been doing this right. Like, your lung function is actually a lot lower than we think it is.

you thought it was. And so, he said, I need you to stay another week so we can work on this. And at that point, that's when I realized there was a lot other suffering that was ahead.

And in my hospital room, I had the Bible and I also had Arthur Pink's Attributes of God book. And that's the two things I just kept storing in my head.

So, this isn't cool, nerdy, theology. This is truth for your real life. It's truth for life and truth for death for you to live in. We all need a powerful, sovereign God.

So, strive to know God as he is and realize it's so hard. Your feelings and your emotions don't affect the person of God. So hard to not do that.

[35 : 59] Meditate on the person of God in his word and allow it to enhance your awe and your wonder of him, your worship of him, and strive to know Jesus Christ, who said in John 8, verse 57, he was facing a hostile crowd.

They were questioning him. so the Jews said to him, you are not 50 years old and yet you say you have seen Abraham. And Jesus responded to them, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham ever existed, I am.

And he used that name of God, like I existed before Abraham. And as expected, they didn't like that. I am Yahweh.

So in Jesus, the God man, God accommodated himself in the greatest way possible. If you see Jesus, you have seen the Father. As you have received Jesus, you have received the Father. God has drawn near to us in the person of Christ for us to know who he is. Beginning of John's gospel, we have seen his glory. So strive to know Christ.

[37 : 14] Flip over, again, I don't know if this is planned, but Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1, we can see it in just verse 15.

He, being Jesus, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together.

You see some of that? He is the creator. He is the ruler. He is the sustainer. We see that all in these verses.

And he became before anything else came. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

[38 : 28] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile all things whether on earth or in heaven making peace by the blood of his cross.

And there it's this idea of Christ bringing together everything that's been breaking apart by sin. And it's also this idea of a reckoning, not just like to bring together reconcile, but a reckoning.

We see that Jesus is those things. So if we want to know the person of God, we look at the Son of God. and he shows us who he is. Isn't it interesting, just in closing, that many of our modern day books and stories that are out there about people encountering the person of God have nothing at all in relationship to Scripture.

People are like, oh, it was just a happy moment, just me and God. So not what the testimony of Scripture is. You see that Moses was terrified.

We know that in all three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and John, there's the, not John, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke, where Jesus is transfigured before them.

[39 : 50] Matthew and Mark say that they were terrified, which actually means scared out of their wits in Greek, scared out of their mind when they saw this transfiguration.

And then in Luke's gospel, it implies that they were like in a deep sleep. And could it be possible that it just describes the sheer exhaustion they had of encountering this scene, overwhelmed, put on the ground, where they lost all their strength.

And we know that John, who calls himself the beloved disciple, the same guy who Jesus, he rested his head on the shoulder of Christ. Same disciple. At the beginning of Revelation, he is terrified and cannot even look at the Son of God.

So we have to come to the Scripture to know the person of God. We have to pray that God applies his truth to our hearts and our lives. But I pray that just seeing how big our God truly is, is convicting to you, maybe even scares you.

I don't know where you are. You might need to be scared out of your wits. Or you might need to be encouraged that such a God stands on your behalf and that you are made right with him through the person of Christ.

[41 : 15] So we can stand boldly because of who God is. Praise him. Let's pray together.