

### I AM WHO I AM

#### Exodus 3:1-8b, 10-15 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." <sup>4</sup> 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." <sup>5</sup> "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup> 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." <sup>13</sup> 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?" <sup>14</sup> 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.'" <sup>15</sup> 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.

You're at a party. There are only a couple of people here that you know. No name tags. Engage the protocol. Extend hand, and say, "Hi, my name is Jon. What's your name?" That's your introduction.

At the very beginning of the Bible, Genesis chapter 1 verse 1, God does not introduce himself to us. There's no backstory or internal monologuing explaining who he is. There's no superhero origin story. He is simply there and begins creating.

Fast forward several thousand years to about 1440 B.C., and we get to see and hear how God introduces himself to Moses. Moses is about 80 years old at this time, having fled Egypt 40 years earlier after murdering an Egyptian who was abusing an Israelite. Now Moses is married and spends his day being a shepherd for his father-in-law. While with his flock near Horeb, the mountain of God, "the angel of the LORD appeared to him in the flames of fire from within a bush." (verse 2) It was a befuddling and amazing sight because the bush did not burn up. Fire doesn't work that way. This is unique. This is something different. Moses had to go check it out.

As Moses goes to check out this unnatural event, God called him by name from within the bush. When Moses responds, God reveals to him something else unique. "Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." (verse 5) By his mere presence, God made this ground holy, pure, perfect.

But Moses finding out this this is God hid his face. He was well aware of his lack of worthiness. He was a murderer. He was a runaway. He had abandoned his family, was avoiding the law. Would we hide our face from God if he appeared to us in a way like this? Or is it not a big deal that God is holy?

When we compare ourselves to other people, we see a lot of the same. We see people who fail like us – in big ways and little ways. We figure that if they are a pretty decent person, then we are too. If there are places where we have not sinned as they have sinned, then I have an advantage. If I sin less than the people around me, then I'm pretty much holy, right? Wrong. Any sin – big or small, blatantly wrong or seemingly insignificant and harmless – just one is enough to mar me with imperfection, imperfection that cannot stand before a holy, sinless God. All it takes is a little reflection, and we know that we have fallen lethally short of God's holiness. Because of our sins, we are separated from God. We can't stand on the same ground. We have to hide our face from God.

In spite of Moses' unworthiness, God did not cast him off the holy ground. Instead, he continued to speak to him without even addressing the sins of his past. The LORD said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." (verse 6a) This voice from the burning bush introduces himself not as an impersonal, unrelatable entity, but as a known and personal God. He is the same God that Moses' father, Amram, had worshiped and trusted in when he and his wife, Jochebed, put

baby Moses in that basket when they could hide him from the Egyptians no longer. This God is the same one that spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – the patriarchs of the entire Israelite nation. This God speaking to him is the God of the past who made the great promises that Abraham and his descendants would inherit the land that the LORD led them to, that they would be as numerous as the stars of the sky, the sands of the seashore.

This God of the past had made another promise, one that Joseph son of Jacob repeated on his deathbed: “God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” (Genesis 50:24) Now it was time for God to act in the present as he told Moses, “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... So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.” (verses 7-8b, 10).

Moses’ past, as bad as it was, as unholy as it was, did not stop God from being his God of the present, one who saw everything that was happening to his people, who sympathized with their suffering, knowing exactly when to resolve the situation and rescue his people. The same is true for us. At the beginning of our worship, we confessed our sins publicly all together and then we were given time to confess to God our private sins. We all know and acknowledge that we are not holy before God based on the sins we know, let alone the sins we commit that we don’t know or remember. But our sins do not stop God from being our God of the present, a God who sees us, remembers us, who is not oblivious to our suffering and trials, who remembers his promises to us and carries them out at just the right time. The God of the present is also our God of the past, who is working today to carry out our deliverance and rescue right now.

Even though the God of the past and the God of the present called Moses to go to Pharaoh to rescue his people, he objects, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” (verse 11) He knows that he is not qualified to serve as a deliverer of God’s people. He has a past. He is not worthy.

God answers his objections by revealing that he will continue to be his God today and in the future. 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.” (verse 12) As has been in the past and as I am with you presently, so I will also be with you in the future. You can look forward to the day when you come back here to this very place. That’s my promise for a future hope. As I fulfill my promise to rescue my people, you can be confident that I will bring you back here to worship me for that great deliverance.

But if someone asks who you are, “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.’” (verses 13-14) The introduction is complete. God is who he is. He is the God of the past, the one your father and your forefathers believed in, the one who Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshiped and trusted. He is the God of the present, the one who sees our current suffering and is putting his plan into action to rescue you and bring good to you. He is the God of the future who will be with you, even as he is now, who will follow through and make good on any and every promise he has made, just as he did with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is God. He is who he is. He is the same in the past, in the present, and in the future.

The same God who appeared to Moses is our same God today. He did keep his promise. He did rescue the Israelites from the hand of the Egyptians and brought them to the that good and spacious land flowing with milk and honey. He did bring Moses back to that very mountain where he then worshiped God and received from God the Ten Commandments. This God of the past remembered his promises, particularly the promise to rescue all people from eternal death from sin, to defeat the devil and destroy him and his work. He did this by sending his Son, who lived perfectly for us, died on the cross to pay for our sins, and defeated the devil. He carried out his promise and rescued us from the bonds of our slavery to sin and gave us holiness when we had none. This is the same God who appeared to Moses, who rescued the Israelites from slavery, and rescued all people from our unholiness, from being eternally cast aside from God.

The LORD has introduced himself to us through his Word. He is who he is. He is the same God of the past, the same God of the present, and will be the same God forever and ever. That means that God will keep his promises to us just as he did to Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This means that the LORD is taking active consideration and participation in our lives right now today, no matter what we have done in the past or how holy we feel, just as he did for Moses. This means that he will always be our God in the future who is with us and who will always be our holiness because he is who he is. Thank you, God, for always being the same in the past, in our present, and in our future. Amen.