

Church at Oakwood

Exodus 3:1-4:17

January 20, 2013

YHWH WHO ACTS

I want to read to you some foundational texts that I see reinforce our main text in Exodus 3 and Exodus 4.

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any."

(Isa 44:6-8)

I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things. (Isa 45:5-7)

"Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'? Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' or to a woman, 'With what are you in labor?'" Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: "Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands? I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host.

(Isa 45:9-12)

"Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: 'To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.' "Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; to him shall come and be ashamed all who were incensed against him. In the LORD all the offspring of Israel shall be justified and shall glory."

(Isa 45:22-25)

Promises imply action. When the promise is given to a person or a group of people those people- who are blessed with the future hope of a new reality-are anticipating that the giver of that promise will keep his word. The giver of the promise binds himself, he pledges his life that if the promise is not secured, if it does not rise as the sun in the morning, the promise-giver will pay the penalty. Therefore brothers and sisters the certainty of the promise being realized is completely dependent on the character and ability of the promise giver to see that it becomes reality.

This is where we land today in Exodus 3:1-4:17. We stand on holy ground as the promise-giver; God has come, to bring into reality the four-hundred year promise given to Abraham in Genesis 15. This is a promise to fulfill prophecy where the children of Abraham would be sojourners in Egypt; they would be afflicted servants, God would bring judgment upon foreign lands, leading the children of Abraham out of their affliction with great and overflowing wealth.

Therefore our text today is simultaneously God acting to fulfill prophecy and bring about promise. God is acting in revelation to Moses to carry out his covenant with Abraham. God is acting to punish idolatrous nations and rulers. Exodus 3, brothers and sisters is God acting to deliver the children of Israel in order that they would become the people of God who would serve in the incarnation of God in Christ who is blessed forever.

This is how we will proceed over the next few minutes and I pray as we hear God's preached word, he would act upon our hearts and minds. He would act to remove our excuses and objection and that we would be astounded at the majesty and greatness of God.

Exodus 3:1-6 will serve as the first "act" as we see: "the calling of Moses by YHWH." Exodus 3:7-12 will serve as the second "act" as we see: "the immanence of YHWH." Exodus 3:13-22 will serve us as the third "act" as we behold: "the revelation of YHWH." Finally Exodus 4:1-17 will serve as the fourth "act" as we understand: "the power of YHWH."

This text teaches us about YHWH's calling, immanence, revelation and power regarding the people of God for the glory of his holy and precious name.

Let's read together this text.

Exodus 3:1-6: The calling of Moses by YHWH

Moses is approximately eighty years old serving as shepherd for his father Jethro(Reuel). As Philip pointed out last week, Stephen in the book of Acts provides us some insight into the age of Moses in Acts 7 where Stephen states,

"When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel.

(Act 7:23)

"Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush.

(Act 7:30)

At the ripe age of eighty, Moses is living in Midian and works near the Horeb also goes by the name of Sinai. Midian is located somewhere on the coast of the Gulf of Aqaba, east of the Red Sea. The actual name of Midian comes from Abraham's fourth son born of Keturah, Abraham's second wife (Gen 25:2). Now this may give us some insight as to why Jethro is called "priest of Midian" With him being priest and Horeb designated as the mountain of God, Abraham in a very oral tradition surely passed on his journeys with God not only with Isaac but his other sons as well. The Midian culture not only had evidences of worship of

the true God who made heaven and earth but there was also worship of false gods to include; Baal-Peor and Ashteroth. Now this plays a very heavy significance as we get into the third act of Exodus 3:13-22 where Moses asks the question:

"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?"
(Exo 3:13).

Second, Moses is serving near Horeb the mountain of God. This mountain will also be known as Sinai. It will be the place where the Hebrews will gather, serve and receive the Law of God. (Ex 19:1) Sinai or Horeb is the place that would be known as a holy place of blazing fire, darkness, gloom and storm. The writer of Hebrews which is in the New Testament provides us just how holy a place Horeb was. It was a place that could not *"be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."* (Heb 12:18-21)

Here is good news! The incarnation of God in Christ has not brought us to this type of mountain where we fear and tremble and refuse to hear God speak. The victory of God in Christ has brought us to Mount Zion:

"You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."
(Heb 12:22-24)

This eighty year old Moses now has the unique and reality changing experience of being in the presence of the infinite and non-dependent holy who calls him to take part in what would be the fulfillment of prophecy and promise.

Our text states that "the angel of the LORD appeared to him." Many contend that this is one of the many pre-incarnate appearances of Christ in the Old Testament. We have another moment when this angel of the LORD appeared to communicate in dramatic fashion regarding a dramatic event on a mountain. It would be the angel of the LORD who would call out, "Abraham, Abraham!" as this old man some centuries earlier was about to slay his son on a mountain. In his obedience to God, God provided Abraham and a young man named Isaac an exodus as a ram was provided by God to be the substitutionary sacrifice (Gen 22). Going forward, it would be the angel of the LORD who would lead and protect the children of Israel. It is safe to say that this "angel of the LORD" who called to Abraham and now calls to Moses is none other than God himself.

The presence of the infinite and non-dependent holy moves even higher as Moses notices that "the bush was burning but was not consumed." Fires require oxygen and a flammable substance to be sustained. Yet we see here that the bush is enveloped with the flame, yet it is not consumed. The flame of fire is yet again the demonstration of the holy presence of

God who purifies, removing the impure and unclean to make way for the holy presence. The bush that is not consumed is the declaration that the LORD, he who made heaven and earth is not dependent on any created thing.

He alone is infinite and self-sustaining. It is the presence of this flame of fire that communicates to us his people the infinite holiness, worth and sinless character of God. When the people would come out of Egypt and eventually gather around Horeb, it would be,

*“wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly...
(Exo 19:18)*

The presence of the infinitely holy and non-dependent God takes on an even greater significance as God warns Moses, “Do not come near...” “Take off your sandals.” “This is holy ground.” Hear these words of God and the words of man, so that we would understand we are not in the presence of some fair-weather friend or god who is to be trifled with:

*And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the LORD to look and many of them perish.
(Exo 19:21)*

*"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"
(Isa 6:5)*

The God who calls Moses is infinitely holy. He is not dependent on anything outside of himself and the warning of God reminds us that we are not like him. He is holy and pure dwelling in unapproachable light and so we are left to cast ourselves on his mercy. The morally absolute and holy God calls us, indeed he commands us to fear him. We must understand our position in the presence of God as people who are his creatures. We are morally deficient and must recognize that to understand love and hate, joy and suffering, to grasp righteousness, we must measure ourselves and all our actions in the presence of this holy God.

This calling of the infinitely holy and independent God is not simply calling one individual to be with God all by themselves. No, this calling of God is God calling men and women into a relationship that is simultaneously individual and communal. God tells Moses,

*"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."
(Exo 3:6)*

I am the God of each one of these men. Each one of these men, God has claimed as his own possession and they have claimed God. And at the same time all of these men are united together around the holy God who has now descended in fire and holiness to call Moses to declare the holiness of God by means of a holy message to create a holy people.

Finally in the calling of God regarding Moses we see once again the brightness of God's character in holiness causes men and women to turn away. Moses hides in face in what I would regard as complete and utter abandonment as he recognizes who has called out to him. Just as the prophet Isaiah would call out centuries later, “Woe is me!” Moses response

is one of complete acknowledgement of God supreme holiness. In Exodus 19:21 we understand the inability of the people to behold the fullness of the glory of God. In Exodus 24:9-11 it is by the grace of God his glory passes by Moses and the assembled leaders and that same grace which protects such men from being consumed by his holy glory. It is the utter reality described by God himself in Exodus 33:20 that “No man shall see me and live.”

Is this to the state of man forever? Will man be like Moses and hide his face from the presence of God? Will man cry out like Isaiah with deep and utter woes and fears in the presence of the face of God.

No! The incarnation of God in Christ is the manifestation of the full glory and brightness of God. In Christ who has taken the sins of his people and set them free into a new reality of life with God; we are made new to see God, face to face and live. Or as Paul says, “For God who said Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). We *now* are able to see and enjoy the face of God in the face of Christ.

Exodus 3:7-12: The Immanence of YHWH

God is transcendent. The Scriptures declare that Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases. (Psalm 115:3) We cannot ascend to God. Righteousness and justice are the foundations of his throne. God transcends all cultures, languages, relationships. God transcends the greatness of the Grand Canyon, the mountains that make up the Himalayas and the vast length and depth of the Pacific Ocean. God transcends the brightness of our sun, our expanding universe and the power of black holes. God is transcendent.

What the Holy Spirit reveals to us in this second act is not only the transcendence of God who is holy but we see this infinite God also freely choosing to come to his creation and act in the midst of his creation to fulfill prophecy and promise. The immanence of God or God being near, also reveals that in his transcendent character he is completely aware of the actions, emotions and sufferings of those made in his image and likeness.

There may be some among us today who are tempted to have a “deist” view of God. God is out there “somewhere.” He is like an absentee landlord. He has set up creation, put people in his creation but leaves it to run on its own; even to the point of becoming like a rundown mobile home trailer. This temptation rises especially during times of suffering when we ask, “Where was God? Why did he not stop this?”

There may be some among us today on the other hand who may be tempted with a “Gnostic” view of God. The “spiritual” is good but the material world-what we can touch- is evil and God would never participate in a world like ours.

Here is the good news. The immanence of God or more specifically, the incarnation of God in Christ tells us that God is so aware of the actions, emotions and sufferings of people, he comes down to bring us up out of: affliction, to judge our enemies and bless us his people.

Immanence is God acting and declaring to his people that our cries-seen, heard and unheard-are ever before him. Therefore our prayers do not hit a bronze roof but are like the incense filled prayers that rise before God and at a specific time he will answer. Do you hear

the echoes of Genesis 15? They will serve, they will be afflicted but at a specific time-I will surely answer.

Now in the larger context, we have a three-fold or Trinitarian proclamation of the holy God who has called Moses and has come near to deliver and judge. In verses 7-8, verses 9-10 and verses 16-17 these repetitive verses provide us specific work of God and the involvement of man to fulfill prophecy and promise.

In verses 7-8 we see the transcendent activity of God. The message is made up of four parts: the situation of the people (afflictions, cries and suffering); the severe actions of the taskmasters; the activity of God (I have seen, I have heard, I know, I have come down, I will bring them up) and the blessings and judgment of God (Hebrews and Canaanites). This is the transcendent activity of God.

In verses 9-10 we now see the immanent activity of God as he will carry out his plan by using a man of two natures (Hebrew and Egyptian) to execute prophecy and fulfillment. The message in verses 7-8 is once again repeated in a different way yet with the same four parts: the situation of the people (cry and oppression), the severe actions of the taskmaster is revealed as being oppressive, the activity of God (I will send you) and the blessing of God (You will bring them out). This is the immanent activity of God.

God has directly and fully seen the affliction of the Hebrews. He has heard the cry with complete attentiveness. God has descended and broken through his created boundaries of heaven and earth to act and execute all the promises of Abraham. So he has abundantly and powerfully come down. The full weight and presence of God is in the deliverance of these Hebrew slaves.

The incarnation of God in Christ involves God fulfilling the prophecy and promise of delivering his people-sheep, church, elect-through his Son Jesus Christ who by nature is fully man and fully God. This same God who is now near us in Christ uses us as his ongoing agents who will bring others into the blessings of godly presence and worship.

Brothers and sisters, the elect are waiting. They have yet to hear the good news that God has indeed heard their cries and seen their oppression in sin and he has acted in such a manner that the dark days of their slavery have now been conquered.

YHWH has sent you to answer their cries and to proclaim to the rulers and leaders of sin, death and despair that Christ is king and their oppressive suffering which has kept the elect of God from enjoying God- is no more!

This now leads us to the third act in this text of Scripture: the revelation of YHWH.

Exodus 3:13-22: The Revelation of YHWH

Remember our context. We are reading about an event that happened in real history, in a real place with real people in real cultures. In Midian, as well as Egypt, polytheism or the worship of multiple gods was not uncommon and with the worship of these multiple gods they possessed names that communicated their identity.

Up until now, God who has been known as Elohim who has revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has been known as:

Elohim of Genesis 1:1-3 who is the all powerful creator of the universe.

El Elyon of Genesis 14:17-22 who is God Most High, the Sovereign God.

El Roi of Genesis 16:11-14 who is the Sovereign God who sees the affliction of the outcast and looks after them.

El Shaddai of Genesis 17:1 who is God Almighty who calls persons to walk before him and be blameless.

El Olam of Genesis 21:33 who is the Everlasting God. He has not beginning or end. He sit the self-existent, self-sustaining infinitely bright and glorious God.

Now in the dawn of the Jewish Age which will be founded on the exodus of a slave people through the mighty hand of God, the God of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses declares this is how I shall be known.

“I Am Who I Am.” When you see LORD it is the word that means Adonai. He is the LORD. YHWH for the Jews is the name that is so holy and so transcended that they would not utter it and so that is the reason you find: LORD or Jehovah.

It is the name that is to be proclaimed off the lips of the people of God. It is the name that revives our stony hearts, saturates our thirsty souls and propels us to love in extraordinary ways. His name implies activity and action, momentum and unchangeness, presence and power.

The revelation of YHWH’s name is directly tied to what he is about to accomplish in the deliverance of his people. God defines who he will be. He is not the creation of the imperfect hands of man or our silly imaginations. He cannot be confined into a box of philosophies, ideologies or political views. He will be who he will be and the designed has no ability, no knowledge and not enough creativity to say who YHWH will be.

So when YHWH declares that “This is my name forever and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations,” what does this look like? It looks and sounds like the song of praise in Psalm 135 that recounts the wonders works of God in this exodus that fulfills prophecy and promise:

Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD, give praise, O servants of the LORD, who stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God! Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing to his name, for it is pleasant! For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel as his own possession. For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses. He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and of beast; who in your midst, O Egypt, sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants; who struck down many

nations and killed mighty kings, Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, and gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to his people Israel. Your name, O LORD, endures forever, your renown, O LORD, throughout all ages. For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants. The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them! O house of Israel, bless the LORD! O house of Aaron, bless the LORD! O house of Levi, bless the LORD! You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD! Blessed be the LORD from Zion, he who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD!
(Psalm 135:1-21)

Verses 16-17 is the third restatement of verses 7-8 and verses 9-10. All four elements are here again. This time, not only is Moses to go before Pharaoh but Moses is to communicate this message to the leaders of Israel and they go as one to proclaim to the king the message of YHWH.

What we are about to behold in the next coming chapters of Exodus is the revelation of YHWH as king over the creation to the world leader of that time period. This is not a contest like we see regarding the AFC or NFC Championship where two opposing forces have the equal chance of victory. No this is the pure revelation that YHWH is king and Pharaoh will submit.

Pharaoh's unwillingness- that is stated in verse 19-to listen to the God who is king will be broken in such a profound and devastating fashion. How will this be done?

And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.'
(Exo 4:21-23)

I (YHWH) will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them."
(Exo 7:3-5)

What we will see and hear are the wails and cries of Egyptians from the stall to the house of Pharaoh. What we will see and hear are the sounds and sights of rejoicing and tears as Hebrew slaves leave free with abundant favor.

So, let it be known to you that refuse to submit to the living God. This YHWH I proclaim to you today has fully revealed himself in Jesus Christ. God has not come in flaming fire or stayed on his holy, transcendent and exalted throne. God has come in Christ. The risen Christ who is present among us today, right now at this moment calls us-he commands us-to come and without fear look upon the bright shining face of him who said, "Let there be

light...Let my people go!” Why will you be like Pharaoh and be unwilling to come? Why will you continue in your stubbornness, believing that your kingdom can stand under the mighty outstretched hand of God?

Exodus 4:1-17: The Power of YHWH

The entirety of our text this morning, there are four signs that are given to Moses by God declaring himself as Sovereign Creator God who alone is to be worshipped. In chapter 3:12 it is the gathering of the free people to worship God. In chapter 4:3-5 it is God’s declaration that is he the sovereign God over beast. In chapter 4:6-8 it is the sovereignty of God over man and finally in chapter 4:9 it is the sovereignty of God over nature.

What is the purpose of these signs in chapter four specifically? They are to confirm to the people of Israel that YHWH, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has indeed appeared to this man and prophet Moses and through Moses, YHWH will give them the sign of true worship as they will leave to serve God at his mountain.

The signs are not given simply for us to stand in awe of and try to figure out how such signs happened. The signs are given in order that we would be pointed to worship, adoration and hope in the sovereign creator God who is all powerful and he alone is to be worshipped.

We need today to recover the truth of the all powerful God who is infinitely able to create, heal and judge. In regards to creation, it is the all powerful God who alone is able to give life:

*"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.
(Deut 32:39)*

Regarding the sickness of our bodies and minds can we recover the cry of:

*Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.
(Psa 6:2)*

Finally we need to recover today that this all powerful God is judge alone. Certainly the water being turned to blood was an announcement to both Israel and Egypt that God has seen the desolation of the children. He has observed their slaughter and he has come, “to bring them up...to a good and broad land and strike Egypt with all the wonder that he would do in it.”

I want to close with five points of application drawing from the objections or excuses of Moses. These objections or excuses are found in Exodus 3:11,13; 4:1,10 and 13. We would be ignorant or liars to say we have never stated one of the objections or excuses that Moses uses as God calls him to accomplish a work for glory of God’s name. We utter objections and excuses that are rooted in being too busy, too lazy or too uneducated. If we would be honest we have objections and excuses that are saturated with a lack of forgiveness for someone, a sin that we will not release ourselves from or you simply just do not believe.

Now we must ask ourselves, what objections and excuses will you continue to use with the knowledge that God has arrived in Christ and triumphed over all principalities and powers?

In verse eleven of chapter 3, YHWH overcomes the *first objection* and excuse regarding your identity by calling each of us to have our identity grounded in the reality that he who calls us has made us his own and is always present with us. Or as Jesus says in John 14:15-18:

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”
(Joh 14:16-18)

The *second objection* or excuse that YHWH overcomes is found in chapter three, verse thirteen. God overcomes the objection of knowing who he is because he has spoken to us and revealed himself to us:

“He has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”
(Heb 1:2-3)

The *third objection* that God overcomes is found in chapter four verse one regarding people not believing the truth of the Gospel that is to come out of your mouth. He has offered the greatest sign regarding the fulfillment of prophecy and promise of his coming and gathering his people to true worship, adoration and hope in God;

“The Lord has risen indeed!” (Luke 24:34).

The *fourth and fifth objections* that God overcomes are your objections and excuses about the ability to proclaim and be used by him through the speaking of his sovereign and infinite authority:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
(Mat 28:18-20)

You are not going alone. God is with your mouth and the works of your hands. You are not alone as you have brothers and sisters who will go into the fray with you.

Now, therefore go! Go with the knowledge that YHWH has indeed come in Christ and by his resurrection, ascension and victorious judgment, God calls his people. Now, therefore go! The transcendent God has come near and Christ walks forever among us. Now, therefore go! God has given his fully revelation in Jesus Christ. Now, therefore go! As Christ who is the wisdom and the power of God has equipped us by the Holy Spirit to speak and do great signs declaring: YHWH is acting fulfilling both prophecy and promise.

Let us pray.

