**The Gospel According to Moses**

**The Call of Moses**

**Exodus 3:1-12**

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We are in a series called the Gospel According to Moses, looking at the book of Exodus. The series is called the Gospel according to Moses because, as we will see, the Exodus is a paradigm or pattern of the gospel and the Christian life. The first half of Exodus (1-18) describes God’s gracious redemption of his people by making himself known in mercy and judgment. My Big Idea is this, God calls the unlikely to do the impossible.

**An Unlikely Encounter (3:1-6)**

We left off last week with a reminder of Israel still in misery and in need of deliverance. They are a picture for the world to see the human predicament. We are all in exile, excluded from God’s presence, fugitives in need of deliverance with the hope of new life in a new world. In contrast, Moses is living a pretty good life, married with a family and shepherd for his father in law. Raised as a prince, grandson of Pharoah, he is now a shepherd like his Jewish forefathers. He never imagined he would be a shepherd, let alone in some remote place. Prepared by the best in Egypt to represent Pharaoh in some official capacity, he is now being prepared by God to be Israel’s deliverer. Moses is looking for good pasture and comes to Horeb, the mountain of God and Mount Sinai (1). This is an unlikely place to encounter God. He is not in Egypt where he can do something but off in some remote place, tending sheep, confronted by an unlikely sight, a burning bush.

The angel of the Lord appears to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush. It was burning but not consumed (2). Moses turns aside to see why the bush is not burning up (3). God’s presence is often represented as fire in Scripture (Ex 13:21; 14:21; Gen 15:17; Rev 1:14-16). When the Lord saw his curiosity, God[[1]](#footnote-1) called to him out of the burning bush, Moses, Moses! Who responds, here I am. God calls Moses by name because he knows Moses. He knew him in eternity, he formed him in his mother’s womb, and he set him apart for salvation and to deliverer Israel. Then God warns him not to come near, to take off his sandals because the place on which he stands is holy ground and makes himself known as the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob (5-6). Moses’ hides his face, afraid to look at God. Let’s unpack this a bit. God warns him not to come near because no one just trounces up to God. Taking off one’s sandals is a sign of reverence in the Ancient Near East, even to this day (2 Sam 15:30; Is 20:2; Ezek 2:17; 23). The ground is holy because God is manifesting his presence. We will see as at the end of Exodus when we look at the tabernacle, the closer you get to a holy and righteous God the more serious and dangerous it was. God makes himself known, I am the God of your Father, then he lists the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God is reminding Moses, and us, that the Exodus story is part of God’s larger story of redemption, continuing the story from Genesis of God is reconciling fallen and sinful humanity to himself through the covenant promises to Abraham. And he is doing just that. When it looked like God was absent, inactive, he had been preparing a way (Gen 15:7; 13-14; 18-21). God is faithful even when we do not see or sense his presence. God has been preparing for Israel’s deliverance through the birth of Moses and keeping him safe as a child and then as an adult and is now about to call him to be Israel’s deliverer. God is faithful even when we do not see it or sense his presence. Notice Moses’ response, he is afraid and hides his face from God. After Adam and Eve sinned, what was their response to God when he called to them? They hid from God. We have been hiding from God ever since.

**An Unlikely Call (3:7-12)**

Then God describes his reactions of Israel’s suffering, I have *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, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites the Hivites and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them (7-9). Israel is oppressed, in bondage, and desperately needs a deliverer. And God has determined that deliverer is Moses, an unlikely man who is in an unlikely place.

God has come down bring them up and out, to deliver them through Moses. Jesus too came down to deliver us. Salvation is described as being delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of light; he has brought us from death to life (Col 1:13; Eph 2:1-7). We all need to be delivered and transferred. We are in bondage to sin and Satan and Jesus is our only hope of deliverance. From being spiritually dead to resurrection life. Transference speaks of a change of circumstances and status. From slavery to freedom and slavery to service. Everybody is going to serve somebody. The contrast could not be greater here, the land of slavery and misery to the land of plenty and blessing.

Then comes the call, God’s assignment. Come, 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 the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain (10-12).” This is covenantal language gain, Israel is God’s people, his children. God does not ask but tells Moses, I will send you to Pharoah to bring my people out of Egypt, but Moses does not think he is a good choice for two reasons. Remember, in Moses’ mind, he is still a fugitive, having committed a crime punishable by death. Secondly, remembers how the Israelite slave responded when Moses confronted him about beating another slave? Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Are you going to kill me too (2:13-14)? In essence he is saying, what right and authority do you have? Moses is not God’s man in his mind.

Listen to God’s promise. He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain (12).” I will be with you is the promise of God’s power and presence to accomplish the task he calls us to do. And then he promises a sign afterward, they will serve/worship God on this mountain. We often want a sign before we step out in faith, but God promises as sign afterwards. The sign is far off but it is faith in that future promise that gives us power in the present to walk obediently in discipleship. God is asking Moses to follow him. God does the same with us. He gives us future signs or promises that if we will believe, trust him, it empowers us to walk obediently in the present. Moses is an unlikely person who does the impossible by faith in the promises of God.

Life Group Questions:

1. Can you remember anytime God did what was unlikely?
2. How does Exodus fit the storyline of the bible?
3. What is Exodus chapter 3:1-12 about? Can you describe it in a sentence?
4. Have you ever had a profound encounter with God? Describe it.
5. Why does God like to use unlikely people?
6. What is the purpose of the sign that Israel would worship God on the mountain after the Exodus?
7. What does this teach us about following Jesus?
8. How is God asking me to respond to this passage?

1. There is debate whether the angel of the Lord is God or not. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)