

Exodus 3:1-15

The Context (v. 1-12)

I. Moses' situation (v. 1)

- A. Amazing beginnings: raised by Pharaoh's daughter
- B. A failure since then: murderer, exile, professionally unsuccessful, aging
= A very unlikely candidate for great things

II. God introduces himself to Moses

- A. Uses a burning bush to get his attention (v. 2-4)
- B. Teaches Moses about His holiness (v. 5-6)
- C. Teaches Moses about His compassion and concern for his people (v. 7-9)
I have "seen", "heard," "am concerned" and I will "rescue them"
- D. Gives Moses his mission (v.10)

III. Moses has a series of disclaimers and questions

- A. Who am I? (v. 10)
 - 1. He is a nobody
 - 2. Pharaoh is the most powerful man on earth
- B. What is your name? (v. 13)
 - 1. Moses needs to go back with a name so that he comes with authority
 - 2. They live in a polytheistic culture, so the Israelites may have believed in many gods at that time
 - 3. Names were very significant in that culture
A name reveals the nature and character of a person

God's Giving of His Name (v. 13-16)

I. Understanding the name

- A. The LORD (v. 15) = YHWH (pronounced Yahweh or Jehovah)
= "He is"
- B. So God calls himself "I am" and his people can call him Yahweh, or "He is"

II. What is the significance of the name?

A. God is communicate something about who he is in and of himself

- 1. He is the eternal, unlimited, unbounded, creator and sustainer of all things who simply is. He is so beyond our comprehension and expectations
- 2. God's first response is "I am who I am" which is almost to say, "you can't name me, label me, put me in a box." He is not like the other local gods. He is the eternal creator of all things, and as such, he is free to be whoever he is and is not beholden to our labels and expectations.
- 3. Notice his name makes no reference to anything outside of himself
 - a. All other names make reference to outside objects, but there is nothing God can refer to that is greater than Himself, so He can only refer to Himself
 - b. He is the one who always is, always was, always will be
 - c. We humans will never fully get our minds around the totality of who he is

4. The story of Job reminds us of God's freedom as the creator to be whoever he is and do whatever he wants to do without needing to explain himself to us (see Job 38-42)

B. God is communicating something about who he is for his people

1. He is an Always Abiding Presence with his people
 "The emphasis is not on God's abstract being but rather on God's presence with Moses and Israel; his 'being' is also 'being with' them"
2. He roots his name in a covenant relationship with a specific group of people
 - a. See "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" in v. 6, 15, 16, 18
 - b. He is not just a big, eternal God who is off doing whatever he wants but he has committed himself to a specific people, to be present with them
 - c. He has entered a covenant with them, present with them "for better or worse"
3. His people get to learn what life in covenant with "I Am" is all about
 - a. = Adventure, surprises, twists and turns (see the rest of Exodus)
 - b. = God's faithfulness no matter what the challenges and obstacles
 - 1) v. 11-12: God will be with Moses and that is all he needs in spite of the obstacles
 - 2) v. 12: His sign to Moses requires faithful obedience before seeing it. Moses just needs to trust in God's presence with him.

Conclusion

I. What is our view of God?

- A. Do we believe in God as He actually is, or have we settled for a smaller God that is simply based on what we would prefer him to be like?
 1. Do we allow God to offend us from time to time?
 2. Some people can't allow themselves to believe in a God who offends them (a God of holiness, sovereignty, judgment, etc.) so they remove those parts.
- B. Where do we get our view of God?
 1. From parents, culture, pastor, what we'd like him to be?
 2. Or from Scripture (which is how God has revealed himself to us)

II. What is our expectation for life with this God?

- A. We need to be open to surprises and the unexpected
 1. Life with the great "I am" can't be limited to our limitations or expectations
 2. Think of Moses: never would have guessed his main ministry would begin in his mid 60's
- B. In the midst of the surprises and challenges, we can always count on God's faithful, abiding presence

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. Explain again the connection between God's statements: "I am who I am," "tell them I AM sent me to you" and "say to them The LORD has sent me." How are all those names related to each other?
3. In your experience, in what ways have you seen people create a God of their own preference rather than accepting God as he actually reveals himself in Scripture? And in what specific ways are you tempted to do that?
4. Where in your life right now do you need to be reminded of God's abiding, faithful presence with you? What would it look like specifically for you to remember that and live accordingly?