

Today we look at the story of the burning bush. It's one of the beautiful tales of the Old Testament, a story that paints a powerful picture of a faithful God who is actively at work in guiding his people throughout the ages. For this God of ours acts in a world that is broken by sin. He has not abandoned this world, but is actively at work from the very beginning of Creation to its end in carrying out his perfect purpose.

And so, we read of a man who had resigned himself to a quiet life in the land of Midian. Moses, that boy saved through the water of the Nile, elevated from slavery to the highest household in the land, raised by the very daughter of the man who sought his death, instructed and taught by the finest scholars in the world, had fled from one of the greatest civilizations of man into the wilderness to lead a much quieter life.

For Moses had been compelled to run away, to flee from the Egyptians, to fear for his life. His plans to help the people of God didn't work, because they were his own plans, and not the plans of a holy God. God would take care of and redeem his people, but it would be at his appointed hour, and not the hour of man.

In God's time, it did come to pass. Moses was tending to the flocks in the wilderness, and when he was at Horeb, a very special thing happened. A bush was burning, but it was not burning up! This was a strange thing to see, as the thinner branches and various leaves of a bush would cause it to otherwise burn very quickly. Why wasn't it burning up? Moses decided to investigate, and he witnessed something very special.

The sign of the burning bush was special since it displayed the holiness of God.. Fire is often associated with the presence of the Lord in his holiness, in his special relationships with his people. When he established a covenant with Abram in Genesis 15, the Lord passed between the rows in the form of a burning torch.

Moses could not approach the bush, even though he was one called by God, because his LORD was present in a very special way. The holiness of the eternal one is so great that even in a physical sign of his presence through something as simple as a burning bush was too great for Moses, a finite man, to bear. But as weak and sinful as Moses was, the LORD is still faithful and steadfast, and he was still invested in redeeming his people. Through this holy sign, the LORD would bring a reminder that he is directing all things according to his perfect promises.

The LORD commanded Moses to take off his sandals because the place where he stood was holy. Then he revealed Himself to Moses. He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." He also revealed his purpose: I have come down to rescue my people.

After explaining who He was, and what He planned to do, the LORD called Moses. Whereas forty years earlier Moses had no calling to deliver the people of Israel from out of the hand of Pharaoh, now he did. Then Moses had acted on his own initiative. And it had failed. But now the LORD calls Moses to be a deliverer.

His appearance to Moses was not a random occurrence. It wasn't because he suddenly remembered something that had slipped his mind. God sending Moses was not like him running to the kitchen to pull the casserole out of the oven after forgetting to set a timer. This activity was done because of his holy promises.

God had already foiled the schemes of Satan and the folly of man in their futile efforts to destroy the lineage of Israel. Though mankind had hardened himself to the point of open infanticide, the LORD had blessed the people and they had continued to grow. But his plans for them did not have them remain in Egypt forever.

God's covenant promises of salvation makes the revelation of his name in this way that much more significant. It reminds us that just because God is the unchanging one does not mean he does not implement change. Just because God is beyond time does not mean he does not act in time. In this way, the LORD would establish his name as steadfast and faithful. I AM who I am. This is the name most commonly used for our God in the Old Testament, and it's nearly never literally translated. Instead, the title LORD is used. Whenever you see Lord in all capital letters in your Bibles, it's actually this covenant name that was recorded in Hebrew.

Our God has many names, and the names that he has revealed to us are given so that we may praise and glorify him for who he is. We are to know our God is a holy and majestic God who is otherwise unapproachable. Only his love and grace in establishing a covenant makes a relationship with him possible. And the holiness of God prevents any true relationship from being possible apart from man being made holy as well. This holiness can only be ours in the name of the Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our relationship with the God who brought Israel out of the land of Egypt is only possible because of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. And this Christ Jesus is the one who made Israel's relationship with God possible as well! He is actively at work in gathering for himself a people for everlasting life, and he's been doing so from the beginning of the world to its end. It's his work that makes our relationship with God possible! And he has identified himself as the great I AM, as true and eternal God. In John 8, Jesus responded to the Jewish leaders criticizing him by testifying that he was greater than Abraham. He said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

The Son of God is the one who revealed himself to Moses, as he is the one through whom and for whom God is working in this world. He is the one who can be called the Great I AM, as the author of Hebrews reminds us, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Indeed, it's only because Christ Jesus is unchanging that we may have certainty that his sacrifice on the cross is enough for us to enter into eternal rest.

Being the great I AM is also means that there is nothing beyond him. Because Christ Jesus is true and eternal God, there is nothing that is greater than him. He has no beginning, he has no end. He was not created. He simply is. We cannot fathom that he has no beginning. We cannot grasp that there is nothing beyond him. He simply is. And his eternal, unbridled, unlimited existence grounds us in the gospel truth that his sacrifice cannot be questioned by anyone as insufficient.

That his redeeming work cannot be questioned is also grounded in who he is, in that there is no reasonable question to ask of our God who *is*. We cannot ask what sense it makes for his bearing the cross. We cannot ask what justice is satisfied. We cannot ask whether good is truly good or evil is truly evil. We cannot determine that everything is relative, including salvation. Because Jesus *is*. Jesus is gloriously self-determined and self-established and self-directed and self-evident because of who he is: the great I AM.

God revealed his name as I am who I am, as a covenant relationship. His desire is a beautiful and living relationship between God and man. His love is for his children, redeemed from a broken world. That relationship, that love, that grace and peace is ours because God has a covenant with us, just as he had established with the father of believers, Abraham, so many years ago. His grace is evident in the person and work of Christ Jesus. We may have a blessed relationship with a God who is not distant, who is not far off, who is not uninvolved or uninterested in this world or our lives. Let us not hesitate to walk before him with grace and truth, fearing nothing in the confidence of who he is, and not who we are. Thanks for listening