**BCM Bible Study: September 9/10, 2020**

**Exodus 3: A Calling and a Revelation**

Reflection: Review last week’s challenge: Take time to think about/write out how God has redeemed or is redeeming your suffering. Consider these questions as you write:

* + How might God form you through trials to serve others?
  + Who do you need to connect with in light of this?

Introduction

Chapter 3 marks a major turning point in Exodus. Though we have the benefit of knowing that God is working through Israel’s trouble, Israel appears to be ignorant of God in chapters 1-2. His personal name (Yahweh) does not appear in the first two chapters. Moses says that Israel cries out in affliction, but does not say that she cried out to God specifically. In chapter 3, God will reveal himself to Moses. In doing so, he reveals him name, which reveals his nature. They have been serving Pharaoh; now they will learn to serve the Lord.

* In these chapters, Israel will begin to learn what God is like. How would you describe God? What is he like?

God Appears: **Read Exodus 3:1-6** (see below for notes about the angel)

* In what way does the burning bush foreshadow the plagues in Egypt? What does this communicate about God? (God’s dominion over creation)
* Why is Moses afraid to look at God and told to take off his sandals? What makes the place of the burning bush holy? (God’s presence)
  + Do you feel like you have a healthy view of God’s holiness?
  + Jesus tells us that he/God is with us by means of the Holy Spirit living in us. In what way should this reality shape the way we live?
* Why does God identify himself the way he does in v.6? (Connects God with their past and their ancestors. They would have known those stories.)

**Read Exodus 3:7-10**

* How does God respond to the suffering of his people?
  + In the same way that God “comes down” (v.7) to deliver the Israelites, God came down to deliver us. In what way does this show you God’s compassion?
* Notice the people groups listed in v.8. Why does God mention these people? What hurdle do they represent to what God is promising?
  + God’s plan is not easy. Not only does Pharaoh need to be overcome, the people in Canaan will need to be displaced for God’s promise to be fulfilled. In the same way, we have lots of hurdles that stand in the way of experiencing a joyful, abundant life. What are some hurdles that feel too difficult for God to overcome?
* Take another look at verses 8 and 10. Who is doing the delivering in each of those verses?
  + What does this tell us about what God is inviting Moses to do?

Moses’ Doubts: **Read Exodus 3:11-12**

* What doubt does Moses present in v.11?
* How does God respond? How does this illuminate what we discovered in verses 8-10?
  + “[This is] an answer that says nothing about Moses, but much about the Lord. Implied in the Lord’s answer is both his presence with Moses in his task, and his power to enable Moses to succeed.” (Ross Blackburn) God is the deliverer; Moses is the instrument.
  + What self-doubts hold you back from serving the Lord as he has called you?
  + We too have the presence of God with us. How does this give us confidence to go and act when God calls us?

**Read Exodus 3:13-15**

* What is Moses’ concern in v.13?
* A Hebrew name is meant to communicate something about the nature of a person. What is your initial thought about the meaning of God’s name in v.14?
  + Verse 14 is both confusing and highly important. First, we must note that God’s answer in 14 is grammatically tied to what he says in v. 12 “I will be with you.” Second, it is important to note that “I am who I am” is stated in response to the Israelites being unsure that God will do what Moses is saying. **Therefore, it is likely that “I am who I am” is meant to assure God’s continued presence and success in deliverance.**
* In light of this understanding, what is God communicating to Moses and the Israelites in these verses? What do we learn about who God is?
* The rest of this chapter seems to explain what we have just learned – God is the One who will bring them out of slavery, the Deliverer, Redeemer. When he is present with us, his plans will be accomplished. **Read Exodus 3:16-22.**
  + How do you see God’s character playing out in these verses?
  + **Read Romans 6:1-4.** In what life circumstances/sin patterns are you hoping for deliverance?
  + Do you ever get discouraged, thinking that God will not heal or deliver? Why?
* It would be incorrect to say that we fully understand the meaning of “I am who I am.” It is purposely ambiguous, as if to say – “you will find out what I’m like.” In Exodus, we find out what God is like by how he delivers his people, but it is a process of pain and waiting.
  + How does the story of Exodus (or the stories we are sharing at 633) bring hope into your frustration and unmet expectations of God?

Challenge

A significant theme of this chapter that will continue in the next chapter is Moses’ anxiety over being able to do what God is asking him to do. The task and Moses’ fears seem too big. But over and over again, God assures Moses that **he** is the Savior – Moses is his mouthpiece. God will give him all he needs and will Himself be all that Moses needs. We would do well to remember that God is the Savior and all we need is Him. In an effort to acknowledge this, here are two suggestions for this week:

1. Practice the Sabbath. Intentionally stop working for a day (or part of a day) to acknowledge that it is not you, but God who makes the world go round.
2. Unplug. Leave your phone behind and go outside to a quiet place to pray and be with God. Bring a journal if that helps keep your mind from wandering.

Extra Notes:

* You may notice that Jethro is not the name of Moses’ father-in-law in chapter 2. There are many ways that people account for this, but a very likely one is that this is another name for the same person. We see this with several other biblical characters – Abram/Abraham, Esau/Edom, Jacob/Israel. Also, Horeb and Sinai are identical names for the same place. Nonetheless, Jethro will be his name going forward. When we note apparent issues like this one, it is important to remember that ancient people read this text and had no problem this it – they would have otherwise made a correction! It is not as if they missed a mistake that we are now finding. My posture is always that there is something here beyond what I can immediately understand.
* Why is Moses so far out in the desert to graze? We don’t know, but it is clear that Moses will go before Israel into the desert to be prepared for his calling. He walks their path before they do – Horeb is another name for Sinai. Israel will find herself here in ch. 19.
* There is a lot to say about the identity of the angel of the Lord. In fact, Jude 5 attributes actions of the angel of the Lord to Jesus. At times it seems that the angel is the Lord Himself, while in other occasions some sort of distinction is made. Context must help determine. Here it is clear that God is present. God is speaking, Moses is told to remove his sandals, and Moses is afraid to look at him.
* We could ask a lot of questions about what Moses does and doesn’t know about God, but I think it is safe to say that he knows very little. He knows enough to know about his forefathers and the stories of God interacting with them, but that is all we can surmise.
* Fun fact – some think that milk and honey was common language used in ancient mythological to convey paradise. If the author has that in mind, he is using that language to convey that Israel is going to an Eden-type place where God is present. This frame the exodus in terms of new creation, a theme that is certainly in line with the rest of Scripture.
* Many have noted that the sign in v.12 is interesting. What kind of help is this to Moses? In my mind, the sign is one for future. It is as if God is saying, “You’ll see. One day you will be back here with Israel and will remember this moment.” He is calling Moses is act in faith, but God will give Moses more immediate signs also.
* Some commentators say that “I am who I am” can be taken quite literally as if God is saying, “They know very well who I am. What a question!” Peter Enns, who holds this view, says that God doesn’t really answer the question seriously.
* There is some dispute about the three days’ journey that Moses is told to ask about because it doesn’t seem that a mere 3-day journey is ever the plan. However, it could be that 3 days was the length of the journey to where the wanted to go.