

## The Good News of a God who Reveals Himself to Us

### Sermon for the Second Mid-week Lenten Service

#### Exodus 3:1-15

Dear friends in Christ,

How does a mere human come to know God?

Our Catechism says how nature testifies that behind this creation is a powerful, divine Creator, and our conscience tells us that we are accountable to Him.<sup>1</sup> But knowing that *there is a God* is not the same as *knowing God*.

How then can we come to know who this God is and what He's like? How can we know how this God feels about us and what His will is *for us*? How can we know whether this God is for us? For us to know that—for us to know *Him*—we need God Himself to tell us and show us. We need Him to come to us and make Himself known to us. In short, we need God to do for us as He did for Moses.

One day, **“Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian.”** Moses, you may recall, had been raised to privilege, not to tend sheep. He was an Israelite, and, with his fellow Israelites at the time, born a slave in Egypt. But he was one blessed boy rescued from the Egyptian king's edict to kill all male Israelite babies—rescued by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in the palace. He'd had to flee, though, when he killed an Egyptian taskmaster. So here he was today, a shepherd in the land of Midian, just as he'd been for the last forty years. This day, however, would prove to be unlike any other because as Moses **“led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God,”** he saw something beyond his understanding: a bush that was burning but was not being consumed by the flames.

As he approached to see what this could be, God called to him from the bush, **“Moses, Moses!”** Moses responded, **“Here I am.”** 5 Then He said, **“Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”**

What was it that made that place holy? The personal presence of the all-holy Lord. God had come to Moses to reveal Himself to him and be known by him. And He had come in a most remarkable and meaningful way! The fire of the burning bush indicated the Lord's divine holiness and awesome power. But the fire was found in the humble plant of a desert bush. The Lord was revealing Himself as a holy God who graciously comes to His people in humble form.

God then gave a further revelation of Himself in His name. From the burning bush, God told Moses that He was sending him to Pharaoh to bring His people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. Moses responded by asking who he should say had sent him. God answered, **“I AM WHO I AM... Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”**

So who is this God? He is I AM. He is the One who alone is eternally, independently, unchangingly present.

He is all of that—and He is more! He is not merely present; He is actively present. He is with His people *for a purpose*. He is with them to be their God, caring for them as His people.

To make that clear, the Lord proceeded to identify Himself even more fully, saying to Moses: **“The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.”**

---

<sup>1</sup> Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation, Q. 105

So who is “I AM”? He is the One who had promised the patriarchs of Israel that He would make of them a great nation, give them a home, and through them bring blessing to all nations. And He is the One who was now setting into motion the fulfilment of those great promises.

At Mount Horeb, the Lord showed Himself to be a God who gloriously and graciously comes to His people and makes Himself known to them. In the burning bush, He revealed Himself as a God who comes in lowly means without diminishing His divinity.

In His words to Moses, He identified Himself as a God who can be trusted to remember and keep His promises. And in His fulfilment of the greatest of those promises—the promise of an Offspring of Abraham through whom all nations would be blessed—God gave an even more astonishing and more revealing disclosure of who He is and what He is like.

As the Lord came to Moses in the wilderness by Horeb, He came to us in the wilderness of this fallen world. He came to us personally, and He came in the most remarkable way!

He came in His perfect divinity—yet He came in the lowliness of humanity. Much as the flames Moses saw were cradled in the lowliness of a desert bush, the true divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ was present in, with, and under His true humanity. As Paul put it in Colossians, “*In Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily*” (Col 2:9). Because of His divine nature, wherever Jesus walked—or knelt or fell or hung—was holy ground.

And as at Horeb, this holy God further revealed Himself in His name. His personal name, Jesus, means “*the Lord saves*,” which is an expression of both who He is and why He came to us; He is the Lord, who came to save us from our sins (Mt 1:20–23). And in His teaching, Jesus revealed more about His identity and mission through additional names or titles. One especially significant way He did that was through what have come to be known as Jesus’ “I am” statements. The following are all taken from the Gospel of John:

“I am the Bread of Life” (Jn 6:35, 48).

“I am the Light of the world” (Jn 8:12).

“I am the Good Shepherd” (Jn 10:11, 14).

“I am the Door of the sheep” (Jn 10:7).

“I am the Resurrection and the Life” (Jn 11:25).

“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life” (Jn 14:6).

“I am the True Vine” (Jn 15:1, 5).

And most remarkably, simply “I AM” (Jn 8:58).

Jesus said that those who are truly children of Abraham do as Abraham did (Jn 8:39).

And what specifically did Abraham do? Jesus said, “*Abraham rejoiced that he would see My day. He saw it and was glad*” (Jn 8:56). By faith, Abraham saw the good news of the Saviour to come, Jesus Christ—and he rejoiced in it! So, too, do the true children of Abraham—those who share the faith of Abraham (Gal 3:7).

Jesus’ opponents responded by scoffing, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus replied with some of the most remarkable words ever spoken, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM” (Jn 8:57–58).

With those words, Jesus was applying the holy, divine name I AM to Himself. He was identifying Himself as the eternal Lord in the flesh.

Jesus’ opponents understood what He was saying. They understood so clearly that “*they picked up stones to throw at Him*” (Jn 8:59). It was not yet His time, though. Jesus hid Himself and left that place—and proceeded on the path that would culminate in His greatest self-revelation.

That journey led Him through passages of rejection, betrayal, and abandonment. Ultimately, it brought Him to a cross, where our God has most fully revealed—made Himself known—to us. There, we see Him as the mighty Creator who died for His own creatures' sin; the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep; the God who came to us and became man, so that He could die for mankind and bring us to God.

On Mount Calvary, we see an even greater revelation of God than was given to Moses at Mount Horeb. Indeed, there we see more clearly than anywhere else just how wondrous His love for us is. Yes, in Christ crucified, our God most fully reveals Himself to us.

There, on the cross, we see God as He wishes to be known: a God who came as a servant to bear our sin and be our Saviour; a God who loved us more than His own life; a God who came in lowliness to lift us up in His grace. And that is precisely the God who comes to us so that we know Him and His grace today.

He comes as the God of our fathers, the Lord God Almighty. Yet once again, He comes in quiet, gentle ways. The One who once spoke to Moses from a lowly bush and who, in His incarnation, came to us in the form of a humble servant, now comes to us in the gently splashing water of Holy Baptism; in the still, small voice of Holy Scripture; in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. Because of His presence, whenever and wherever He comes to us in these holy means of grace, we are on holy ground.

There, He makes Himself known to us as the Lord who has fulfilled his promise to redeem us. He comes to us that we may know Him as the one who is and will always be with us and for us.

All glory, honour, and praise be to Him who was and is and is to come: Christ Jesus the Lord, our great I AM. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.