

# Who Am I That I Should Go?

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     good morning. It's great to be with you again. I'm just going to put that up there. Does everyone hear me okay? Let's pray. Father God, Lord, we thank you. Lord, we thank you that this is your day. We thank you that your grace and mercies are new each and every day.

Father, we ask for your help now as we come to your word. Father, would you dwell in our hearts? Would you dwell in our minds? Lord, help us to hear you and to see you this morning. Father, we ask this now in Jesus' name. Amen.

So we're continuing in our series in Exodus. I believe two weeks ago, Cal was in chapter two. Last week, John McKinnon was here, I believe. I trust that was encouraging. I do send the greetings of Calderwood. Everyone says hi. And they would really love to see as many of you at the end of the month at the Connect service at four o'clock, as Cal said.

So yes, we're back into Exodus. So Exodus chapter three, if you have a Bible, please open it to Exodus chapter three. The words will appear on screen.

But before I read the scriptures, I want you to ask you this question. If the Exodus story was a stage show, or if you went to the theatre and the show that you were going to see was the Exodus story, who do you think the main characters would be?

[ 1 : 3 4 ]     You've obviously got Pharaoh. You've got Moses. God, Aaron, Miriam, Moses' mother. But much like every good story, there's instructions or introductions, and the story develops through the characters that we meet, particularly at a stage show.

Characters enter stage left, exit stage right. And if Exodus were a stage show, from the moment the curtain rises, we would have been focusing on Pharaoh, and that was in chapter one.

And then Pharaoh would have come off stage, and then Moses would have entered. So we, as the audience, have heard the story of Pharaoh, and we've heard from Moses.

We know the context that the nation of Israel has found itself in slavery, suffering from oppression of the Egyptians. The first few moments of the story, we've had long periods of time, and David, Alan, and Cal have covered those moments in the past month or so.

Cal, two weeks ago, reminds us that Moses was God's man. That the New Testament paints Moses in a positive light when we often have him pictured as falling at the first hurdle.

[ 2 : 5 5 ]     So as Moses flees from Egypt, having killed the Egyptian, imagine the stage show. Moses runs off, exits stage right, the lights go down, but the curtains don't close yet.

We just have darkness. And before we get to the next scene, before the backdrop changes, we hear these verses.

Exodus 2, 23 to 25. During those many days, the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help.

Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

God saw the people of Israel, and God knew. So I don't know if you're a fan, or if you enjoy going to the theatre or not, or even the pantomime, the Christmas pantomime.

[ 4 : 03 ] I don't know if you're a fan of pantomimes. But we all know this morning that we know some of the basic elements that make up a good story.

And usually every good story has a rescue mission or a hero. If I were to ask anyone of you, or anyone at all, if anyone had even the smallest knowledge of the Exodus, or the book of Exodus, or the story of Exodus, and you were to ask them the question, who is the hero in the Exodus story?

Then even the guy in the street who maybe knew just the smallest amount, he would probably say that it was Moses. Well, I hope as you, as a church, as Bill's Hill Baptist, as you continue to gather each week, and you continue on the Exodus story, I hope one thing happens.

I hope the hero that you see in the Exodus story, the spotlight moves off Moses and onto God. And we'll see that this morning, this morning's passage is the start of that.

The spotlight's moving off Moses and onto God. So imagine that as a stage show, as I say, we've heard from Exodus 23, 24, and 25.

[ 5 : 21 ] The lights would go down, the scene, or the backdrop would change, and then we get into our morning's passage. Exodus 3, the first 12 verses. Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian.

And he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush.

He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.

When the Lord saw that he, Moses, turned aside to see, God called him out of the bush, Moses, Moses. And he said, here I am.

Then he said, do not come near, take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. And he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

[ 6 : 30 ] And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I've 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 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, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hittites, 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. 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. So we'll take this morning's passage in two sections, but then we'll add on another one at the end.

[ 7 : 48 ] So it's really three sections. But first of all, we want to look at how God appears to Moses. And after we've looked at how God appears to Moses, we'll see that God speaks to Moses.

And then we'll end it with how the Exodus story shapes the Jesus story. So God appears to Moses. So we're at the backdrop of Mount Horeb, or the Mountain of God, which is two different names for Mount Sinai.

Moses is a shepherd, and he's been shepherding his father-in-law's sheep for the past 40 years. He's guiding his sheep to the mountain, and here we have God appear to him.

Think about how different people make entrances. Think of the President of the United States, Air Force One, when it comes to town. Think of royalty as they drive up to whichever royal engagement that they're going to.

Red carpets would be rolled out. Often there'll be music getting played. Rows of people gather to see the entrance of the very important person. Think of movie stars at the Oscars.

[ 9 : 07 ] Notice how many people, as they walk up to the entrance, they know that there'll be lots of people there looking at them. They know as they make their appearance that heads will turn, that cameras will flash.

They want to make the most grandest entrance possible. Well, none of that takes place in Exodus 3, when God makes his appearance to Moses.

Notice how it wasn't the fact that the bush was on fire that got the attention of Moses in verse 3. Cast your eyes to verse 3. And Moses said, I will turn aside to see this great sight.

Why the bush is not burned. It would have been very common for dry bushes in the desert to catch fire in the heat of the day. But on this occasion, Moses looked and then looked again and noticed this was different.

The bush was burning, yet it was not consumed, it says in verse 2. So if Cal had given me a shorter passage, we could have taken more time to get into some of the imagery or some of the symbolism.

[ 10 : 18 ] But let's just pause for two seconds and see what we've got here. So we've got the character and we've got the prop. Many times in the Bible, God's people are described as either like a plant or a bush or even a tree.

The suffering of God's people in Egypt is often described like being in a furnace. So what do we have here in our scripture this morning? What's going on in this story?

We have the mountain backdrop. The main prop is the bush. The bush is burning. But it is burning, but not consumed. Moses has been in the wilderness for 40 years.

40 years he's been shepherding his father-in-law's flock. All the while, God's people have been in slavery back in Egypt.

And again, I'm thankful for Cal's sermon two weeks ago. God, remember, wasn't slow to act. He was patient to wait for his people to cry out.

[ 11 : 25 ] And that cry has been heard. And we see that in chapter 2. It wasn't heard by Moses. But it was heard by the main character.

It was heard by God. And God is moving into rescue. The burning bush turns Moses' head towards God.

Which in turn, it relates to God's people. Who are suffering from affliction. They are suffering, but they are not defeated.

They are suffering, but they are not annihilated. They are in trouble. And they are in need of rescuing. And now, we, the audience, are introduced to the one who will rescue them.

Verses 4 through to 6. When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called him out of the bush. Moses, Moses.

[ 12 : 27 ] And he said, Here I am. Then he said, Do not come near. Take your sandals off your feet. For the place in which you are standing is holy ground. And he said, I am the God of your father.

The God of Abraham. The God of Isaac. The God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face. For he was afraid to look at God. So the first readers of the Exodus book.

They were the generation of Israel. Who were either on the verge of the promised land. Or have just gone into the promised land. So when they hear that it's Yahweh's voice coming from within the bush.

They must have been reassured. God speaks and Moses listens. When they had been brought out of Egypt. So when the first readers would have been brought out of Egypt.

It was God who'd done that for them. So when God speaks. The first leaders really, really need to pay attention here.

[ 13 : 30 ] God states that it was he who first appeared to their forefathers. It's the same God now that's speaking to Moses. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In other words, he, God, the promise keeper God. Who spoke to those forefathers. Is now doing the same with Moses. His promise was that they, God's people, would enter the land that God had promised them.

Generations before that. This conversation with Moses is the continuation of that rescue story. So now, when the first readers think of Moses.

They should now have him as God has him. As the continuation of the promise. The one who will deliver. Moses is now the new Abraham, Isaac.

The new Jacob figure for God's people. God appears to Moses as only God can. God calls Moses by his name.

[ 14 : 40 ] And he tells him about his previous encounters with his people. This is God's story unfolding before Moses' eyes. And before the ears of the first readers.

And it's a very personal approach. God calls Moses, as we said, by his name. He states that he is the God of his father.

This would have been hitting Moses so close. It would have been hitting his heart directly. As only God can do. Put yourself in Moses' sandals as you take those sandals off.

Imagine someone you greatly admire. So have that person in mind. Who do you greatly admire? Now imagine that they knew you.

And that they called you by name to come and listen to what they had to say to you. How would you feel? No wonder Moses hid his face out of fear and respect.

[ 15 : 44 ] The God of the Genesis story. Who promised his forefathers that he would keep his promises to his people. Has just called on him from a fire.

And here's what he had to say. So as we make our way down. Verses 7 through to 10. Then the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt.

And I've heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings. I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians. And to bring them out of the land to a good and broad land.

A land flowing with milk and honey. To the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hittites and the Jebusites. And now behold the cry of the people of Israel has come to me.

I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppressed them. Come I will send you to Pharaoh. So that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

[ 16 : 48 ]    Spotlight now is firmly on God in these verses. It's all of God in verses 7 through to 10. And none of Moses. God speaks and tells Moses what the rescue plan is.

And it's a reminder from God of verses 23 through to 25 in chapter 2. Moses and the first readers and ultimately us.

We know that God has heard, remembered, God has seen and God knows the situation that his people are facing. These are such human qualities.

Hearing, remembering, seeing and knowing. This is a personal Yahweh call. The phrase, my people, is bookended in verses 7 through to 10.

Look at how God describes the Israelites as his children. And how distinctive that they are compared to Egyptians and the Gentiles who are currently occupying the land that is destined to be God's peoples.

[ 17 : 54 ]    God is showing the playbook to Moses and is telling him, this is what's going to happen. And it will happen. God, the main character, it's his plan, his rescue.

And it's him who's telling Moses all that's about to happen. Verse 7 sums up God moving into action. Can you imagine if you were a parent and you heard your child was in distress and that you saw that your child was being harmed?

You would act, would you not? You would act so quickly that you wouldn't even think about it. You would move into action to put a stop to whatever was happening to your child.

But the difference between us and God is that we would tend to act first and then think later. We would no doubt act rashly in that kind of situation. But thankfully, we aren't God.

And his ways aren't our ways. God remembered his promise to Abraham and is going to use an old man like Moses to fulfill his rescue.

[ 19 : 08 ]    Verse 10, come, I will send you to Pharaoh. God is telling Moses that he will be the man that God has chosen to fulfill his promise. God kept Moses from being killed as a baby.

God had him placed in the palace as a prince in Egypt. And now God has had Moses shepherding for 40 years.

Moses may or may not know that he is going to be used by God to bring about his rescue. Moses, remember, is God's man for God's people, for God's rescue.

Moses knows his family's history. Moses knows Egypt. And Moses knows how to shepherd a flock of sheep.

When I think about Moses in chapter 3, I think about him being the right man at the right time. He's a bit like another hero who I kind of look to or think of when I think of the right man at the right place at the right time.

[ 20 : 23 ]    I don't know if many of you would know this picture. January 15, 2009 was the day that a US Airways Airbus A320 emergency landed on the Hudson River in New York City.

Of course, this was a crash landing. But thanks to the pilot's skills and response, all 150 passengers and five crews survived.

Captain Chesley Sullenberger, or Sully, as he's known to his friends. Captain Sullenberger, affectionately known, as I say, as Sully, was the main pilot.

And his first officer, his co-pilot, was Geoffrey Skiles. Both these men had vast amounts of flying experience. Sully is a former military pilot with a total hours of 20,000 flying hours experience at the time of the accident.

The pre-flight and initial take-off run was normal. Early in the climb, the aircraft hit a flock of birds, Canadian geese to be specific. And it was such a hit that it obscured the pilot's windscreen.

[ 21 : 52 ] This was at the height of just under 3,000 feet and a distance of 4.5 miles from the airport. Almost immediately, both engines shut down. But the aircraft continued climbing for a further 13 seconds.

Then the aircraft entered a glide that descended as the pilots responded. Sullenberger took control of the aircraft, while Skiles attempted to restart the engine. Sullenberger made a mayday call at 22 seconds after the bird strike, calmly responding.

This is Cactus 1539. Hit birds. We've lost thrust on both engines. We're turning back towards Lagardia. Now, ultimately, there were several factors that came together to make this ditch successful, or, as the headlines put it, miraculous.

As well as a fast approach and appropriate action by the pilots, good weather, clear visibility on the day, and aircraft equipped for a water landing, fast reactions from the cabin crew, and landing so close to boats who were able to respond, they all contributed to this successful rescue.

The hero of the miracle of the Hudson in 2009 was Captain Sullenberger. What we have here in Exodus is God saying to Moses, you'll be my Captain Sully.

[ 23 : 18 ] You're the man for this rescue. You're the guy I'm choosing to rescue my people. But naturally, Moses does what any one of us would do in that situation.

Verses 11 through to 12. 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. Moses answers with, Who am I that I should go? But God immediately says, But I shall be with you.

You could sum up chapters 3, the beginning of chapter 3 through to chapter 417, as Moses' call and commission by God. Here in these verses, we have the beginning of that commission.

Have you ever felt God's call in your life? And then you've suddenly felt, Who am I? It's only when you look back and see God, that God used you to do his will, that you see the bigger picture.

[ 24 : 36 ] But God knew the bigger picture from the very beginning. Have you ever been asked to help in an area of ministry, but you've naturally seen yourself or felt yourself saying, How can I get involved in that?

Have you done what Moses has done? Have you thought, Who am I? I can't serve in that area of ministry. Has God used you to share his word with someone, and you've turned out to be a key person, and bringing that person to faith?

But at the start of that journey, you've thought, Who am I? I can't share God's word with that person. Have you ever been promoted in work, and on the first day of your new job, thought, Who am I?

I can't do this. I often feel like that when I run SU residential events, when I look at the list of campers that come in, and all these parents have put their trust, and me and my team, to look after their children, and at SU residential.

And it's usually the days before it, I think, Who am I? How are we going to do this? But what am I forgetting? I'm forgetting that God says in the scriptures, But I will be with you.

[ 25 : 49 ] God will be with you if you're in a new job. God will be with you as he calls you, to share God's word with one another, and with your friends and family who don't know God.

God will be with you if you're called into a new area of ministry. I think this would have been so helpful for the first readers of the book. They've literally been rescued, and they're following Moses through the wilderness for 40 years.

But all along from the very beginning, it's been God who's been in control. It's been his plan. It's been his rescue. He's the hero. He's picked the 80-year-old former prince, now shepherd, to lead his children out of the hand of the Egyptians.

And they will go on to experience the goodness of the land. So for us today in 2023, where does that leave us?

And this is us drawn to a close. Remember, when we read this rest of the story, we don't see us as Moses. Remember what Cal taught us two weeks ago.

[ 26 : 55 ] When we read David and Goliath, we don't put ourselves in David's shoes. David points to Jesus. In Exodus, we should see Moses, and we should remember that Moses is pointing to Jesus.

We are just like the first readers. We are in need of rescue. We are Israel, God's people, groaning and crying out for help. So the Exodus rescue shapes the Jesus rescue.

So my daughter Anna, you saw her out the front, literally trying to whack Cal on the head. Anna's got a jigsaw puzzle. It's not a big jigsaw puzzle, but it's quite unique in the fact that it's got two pictures on each side of the pieces.

So you do one side and it's day, and then you can flip it over, and then it's night. This is what we have here when I think about the Exodus story and the Jesus rescue.

It's the same pieces of the story. The same pieces that fit into the Exodus story fit into the Jesus gospel story. And if you were to get Anna's jigsaw and you were to make it and you were to somehow put it on its...

[ 28 : 05 ] If you were able to stand it up like you would see in an art gallery and you could walk around this jigsaw in the same way that you walk around a piece of art in an art gallery, you would see both sides of the jigsaw.

You would see the day picture and then you would see the night picture. This is what we have here. See if you can follow me as we look at some of the pieces in this story and some of the pieces of the gospel story.

The blueprint of God's rescue for his people in Exodus can also be found in Jesus' rescue story. Verse 1, Moses was the shepherd. John 10, verse 11.

Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Verse 8 in Exodus 3. God comes down to rescue his people, his children.

John 6, verse 50. This is what Jesus says. This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat of it and not die.

[ 29 : 13 ] I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And if the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

Jesus comes down. Verse 10 in Exodus 3. God describes Israel as his children. John chapter 5, verse 11.

He came down to his own and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Verse 12, we've just looked at it. But God said, I will be with you. Matthew 28, 18 to 20. And Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

[ 30 : 24 ] It's all about God. The book of Exodus is all about God. He is the main character. He is the rescuer and he saves us from our sin, which enslaves us.

God keeps his promises. He promises Moses that he, Moses and God's people, will return to the place of the burning bush. They will be back at that site.

Jesus is the main character that the Bible points to. Moses points to Jesus. King David, who was also a shepherd, he points to Jesus.

Exodus itself points to Jesus. Let us give thanks to God for Jesus. Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for your son.

Lord, we thank you that Jesus came to earth humbly as a baby. Father, we thank you that Jesus gave up all his heavenly rights to dwell amongst us.

[ 31 : 37 ] Father, we thank you that it is you who reveals who Jesus is to our hearts and to our minds. Lord, it is you who makes our blind eyes see who Jesus is.

Father, we thank you that Jesus went to the cross in our place because of our sin. Father, help us to share this good news.

Help us to see when we read in Exodus, help us to see you at action. Help us to see you rescuing your people. Father, we are so thankful for your goodness and for your love.

Lord, we thank you for your Holy Spirit who is our helper and is with us. Lord God, we thank you for your word. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 32 : 39 ] Amen.