

# The God Who Redeems

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[ 0 : 00 ] So, we're going to look at the Bible together now and go to a passage that we've just read in the book of Exodus, chapter 5, the end of chapter 5 in the book of Exodus into chapter 6.

And in verse 7 of chapter 6, God says this, I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, or as it could be translated and often is, you will know that I am Yahweh your God. So, we're going to think about who God is, the name that God gives to himself here, Yahweh, and what that tells us about the nature of God, the character of God, and the mission of God. So, it is very nice to be here, slightly spooky looking out into the congregation and seeing so many faces from my childhood, but also great. Great to see this congregation still thriving because we live in a culture and an age where the church has faced lots of challenges. And so, it's so great that God is using this church to still proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to a city that needs it so much. Grateful to be here and be invited. Thankful for Colin and for his ministry here, for its effectiveness and fruitfulness, and lots of other great leaders in this congregation over many, many years. So, this was my church through my childhood.

I grew up in this church. I professed faith in this church. I was called to ministry in this church. But I'm here tonight, not really because I'm me, but because I'm Douglas Macmillan's son, and that's absolutely fine. He was a minister in St. Vincent Street Free Church from 1974 to 82.

And that leads us on to the idea of names. God tells us his name here is Yahweh. And names matter. Names have meaning. I have two or three names. My first name is Neil, which means champion, and that's probably not entirely appropriate at any level. But my surname is Macmillan, which is Gaelic for son of the bald man. So, if you knew my dad, you know that that one is entirely appropriate.

So, Neil Macmillan's son of the bald man. Names are given to us. We don't get much choice in it. But when God speaks about his name, one of the things we see immediately is that we don't name God.

[ 3 : 03 ] We don't get to tell God who he is. But rather, God tells us his name in order that he can reveal to us who he is and what he's like. And so, here in this passage, God is saying that he is Yahweh, the God who comes to redeem his people.

In verse 6, he says, Say to the people of Israel, I am the Lord, or I am Yahweh. And then he goes on to explain who Yahweh is, the God who redeems.

And then in verse 8, he wraps it up again. And I'm going to bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am Yahweh.

So, here he's describing himself as Yahweh, the faithful God who redeems us from slavery to sin and death. The faithful God who rescues his people.

He's getting us from the Holy Spirit. He brings us from the Holy Spirit. He brings us from the Holy Spirit. Out of misery. Out of our sin. Who brings us out. Who walks with us and sticks with us.

[ 4 : 20 ] He sets us free. And then he brings us home to himself. And that is good news. As God begins to tell us who he is and what he's like, what we hear should really bring hope and encouragement to us. Because God is saying He cares about the misery and suffering of our lives. He's going to do something about it.

He's going to come and rescue and redeem us, walk with us through this world, and bring us home to Himself. And so that's great news for every messed up human being in the world, every messed up human being in this city, every messed up human being in this room, which is me and all of you. We all have mess in our lives that needs God's help. And so God wants us to know that He is Yahweh, our God, who brings us out of sin and suffering and brings us in to life with Him and to being at home with Him. Two quick observations. One is this, that when you read your Bible, it's

very unlikely that you'll come across the word Yahweh. In verse 15 of chapter 3 in the book of Exodus, God said that Yahweh was to be His name forever, the name which He was to be remembered by throughout all generations. So for the Israelites, the name of God became so holy, the name Yahweh became so holy, that when they read the word Yahweh in their Bibles, they said a different word out loud. They held it in such reverence. So they would use the word Adonai, the Lord. So when you read in your Bible, the Lord, capitalized all in uppercase, that's actually the word Yahweh, okay? The name by which God wishes His people to know Him. Why does God wish His people to know Him by the way named Yahweh? And I think the reason for that is this, that Yahweh is what you might call God's family name. Now when it's translated the Lord, all in uppercase, it sounds like a title.

So it sounds like a title of somebody who is grand and removed from us. So you might meet a Lord occasionally as you stumble through life. You might come across Lord Cameron of Bishop Norton or whatever he is. I can't quite remember where he is the Lord of. And if you meet a Lord, you probably feel slightly intimidated. Maybe you feel you have to curtsy or tug your forelock or whatever.

That's not the kind of name that Yahweh is. Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton is also David Cameron. And his wife, his siblings, his family, they don't call him your Lordship when he appears for breakfast.

They say, hello, David. So when God tells you His name is Yahweh, He's actually, He's taking to you this idea that He's not a God who is distant and removed and remote from you, but rather He wants you to understand to know that He is a God who is near, who is close, who's present, and who's with you.

[ 7 : 56 ] This is the name that I want you to know me by. Yahweh. He says in verse 3, when I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, I didn't make myself known to them as Yahweh, but now I will tell you who I am. We're getting a new insight into who God is.

God, this is the name that God gives to His friends and family to know Him by. The name He gives you to know Him by. So a couple of things to say about that name then. One is this, that Yahweh means God of faithful love forever. And then secondly, that Yahweh means God of redeeming love. And then I'm going to finish with the idea of Yahweh as a God of missional love. So Yahweh as the God of faithful love forever.

And we were away, some of the guys at my church were away for a weekend together a few weeks ago. And at one point I asked the question, what's the strongest thing in the world? And all the guys who had any scientific background just looked at me and thought that question doesn't make any sense.

But I was trying to get the idea that, you know, there are some things in this life that seem extremely hard and durable. And we came up with carbon and diamonds and carbon nanotubes.

So what's the strongest thing in the universe? And of course, as Christians, we have an understanding that the most durable, the strongest thing in the world is God's commitment to us as His people.

[ 9 : 39 ] There is nothing stronger and it can never be broken. Romans chapter 8 tells us, nothing, nothing in life and death or in heaven or on earth can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The strongest thing in the universe is the commitment that God makes to those of us who are His people. Nothing will ever separate you from His love.

But it doesn't always feel like that, does it? Sometimes things happen to us in life where we feel that maybe God has stopped loving us or maybe we do things in life that we sometimes think will mean that God has stopped loving us. I think I became a Christian at a New Year's Day service in St. Vincent Street Church in one of the lower halls on the 1st of January 1980, just around then. So I'd be about 12 years old. And I really knew the presence of God and I felt this really strong personal commitment to Jesus Christ. But I have to say my Christian life, if it could be described as a teenager, was very, very inconsistent. Full of ups, full of downs. Across the road where the retail park is now used to be coalyards. I remember getting thrown in the back of a police van in the coalyards one night for the terrible crime of trespassing. But, you know, teenage years lived in lots of different ways and lots of times when I really felt like I let God down. And sometimes that feeling of letting God down was so severe, so real, that I would think to myself, surely God must be done with me now.

Surely I've thrown everything back in His face one time too many. Surely I've shown such kind of disregard for His love and kindness. And that would be one voice I'd hear when I really failed God badly.

But then another voice I would hear would be this. All who come to me, I will never turn away. I'll never cast you out. He's the God who doesn't give up on us. No matter how often we fall and fail, no matter how far we fall and fail, no matter how difficult life becomes, here what God is telling Moses and His people in their slavery and their suffering and in their misery is, I'm the God of forever love who never gives up on you. I will pick you up from where you've fallen and I will walk with you and I will get you safely home. The book of Exodus is a showdown between Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and between Yahweh, king of kings. It's a power struggle between the most powerful man in the world and the God who reigns over all things. Pharaoh was considered to be an incarnation of one of the [13:01] He was seen as a divine king. And yet, as we read through the book of Exodus, what is this God-like king? How does he come across? Well, we see he's capricious.

He changes his mind. He's unreliable. He's not dependable. He's remote and unapproachable. He's dangerous and bloodthirsty and vicious and cruel. So that's one kind of king we see in the book of Egypt. And then we see this very different king, Yahweh, faithful, dependable, merciful, kind, who walks with His people, not remote but approachable, not unreliable but dependable, not unpredictable but committed in love to His people.

So verses 4 and 5 are telling us that Yahweh is the covenant God who remembers His people and His promises.

He says, God never forgets His promises to you.

God hears your suffering, your cries. He takes note of your situation, and He promises that He's going to be faithful to you.

[14:43] He sees their slavery and suffering, and He sticks with them. He's the super glue God. He glues Himself to His people through His covenant, and in that He creates a bond with you that cannot be dissolved.

You can't shake God off, and God won't let you go. He's not like Pharaoh, indecisive and unreliable. He's utterly dependable, which means that you and I know this, that God is with us whatever we're going through.

In chapter 3 of Exodus, Moses comes to God to ask about the work that God is giving him to do in going to Pharaoh and asking for the release of the Israelites.

So in verse 11 of chapter 3, if you go back in your Bible or your app, then Moses says to God, who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?

Fair question. What an intimidating situation this man has been put in. But God said, I will be with you.

[16:03] This will be the sign for you that I've sent you. When you bring the people out of Egypt, you will serve God on the mountain. Then Moses got a second question for God. If I come to the people of Israel and they say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, what's his name, what shall I say to them?

God said to Moses, I am who I am. Say to this, this to the people of Israel, I am has sent you. And then in verse 15, say to the people of Israel, Yahweh, the Lord, God of your fathers, has sent me to you.

So in chapter 3, what God is doing is he's reassuring Moses in the face of a really intimidating, difficult situation, I am with you.

And then when Moses says, what am I to tell the Israelites about who sent me? God says, I am who I am. Tell them that I am has sent you. And then in verse 15, tell them that Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has sent you.

And these words, I am, and the name Yahweh, have the same root, the same basic meaning. Sometimes we can translate as well, I am that I am as I will be who I will be.

[17:15] So you're getting the idea here again? I will be who I will be. I am who I am. You can depend on me. I'm not changing. I'm not unpredictable.

Sometimes verse 14 in chapter 3 is treated as a kind of philosophical statement of inscrutability. Moses says, who are you? And God is saying, I am who I am.

You know, it's like a Zen sort of saying. I just am. You know, you can't really know me. Or sometimes it's taken as a philosophical statement of self-existence. I am who I am.

I am the God simply who exists. And that's true. But in chapter 3 of Exodus, Moses is not really debating philosophy with God.

He's crying out to God for help in a desperate situation. He's asking the question, God, can I depend on you?

[18:14] The question we all ask when life is hard. So God tells him, yes. I am Yahweh.

You can depend on me. I will be who I will be. I am Yahweh, the faithful God of covenant love forever.

His anxious servant Moses, his suffering people Israel, they know that God, not just that God exists, but that God is actively committed and present with his people.

I got a copy of Evan McDonald's latest publication, A Family We Belong To. The story and the history of the congregations represented here.

And what is it but a record of faithfulness? It's the story of Yahweh God through the last 200 years. God has been with his church.

[19:18] God is with his church. And God will be with this church, whatever it faces. In Malachi chapter 3, God says, I am Yahweh and I do not change. Every church faces hard things and challenges, but we face them because we know that Jesus Christ is with us.

Every Christian and every human being faces hard challenges in life. And God says, if you trust me, I will be with you.

I am with my people. We will face bereavement. We'll face cancer treatment. We'll face terrible bosses who treat us like Pharaoh treated the Israelites, maybe.

We'll face relationship breakdown. We'll face loneliness. We'll face depression. We'll face lots of sorrows and struggles in life. And God says, I am Yahweh, God of faithful love forever.

We can rest in the promise of God's faithfulness. I want to just go for a minute to the idea of Yahweh also means God of redeeming love. In verse, back in chapter 6, God says that he will both bring us out and bring us in.

[20:33] In verse 7, he says, he'll bring us out from the burden that we are under, the burden of the Egyptians. And then in verse 8, I will bring you into the land that I swore.

The God who brings us out to bring us in. He brings us out of sin and death and brings us into his presence, into his family, and then into his home forever.

At my church in Edinburgh, we run a little thing called Think and Drink. And we hire a room in a local sort of hotel and we say to people, if you're willing to think, we'll buy you a drink.

So we rent a room and we have a topic like, you know, is the world better off without religion? Is there such a thing as truth? Those kind of slightly philosophical topics.

And we have about 20 atheists and agnostics who come along very regularly to that community. There are two Christians from the church who host a conversation, very open conversation, about belief and understanding of life, etc.

[21:39] And that's been running for about three years. And over those three years, some of the people from the group have very occasionally come to an event at the church, a carol service, a music event, something like that.

But then about three months ago, a woman from that group turned up at church on a Sunday morning, sat at the front of church and she wept through the entire service.

So I met up with her a couple of days later and she's got a background in Roman Catholicism as a teenager, left it all behind in her late teens. And I said to her, what's going on?

And she said this to me, she said something, she said, the Lord is bringing me back. She'd been an atheist for many years, read every book that Dawkins ever wrote and she said, the Lord is bringing me back.

That's what God does. He goes to people far away, people in sin and suffering, people who are lost and needy, people like us, people like me, people like you, to bring us back.

[22:46] Everything between verse 6 and verse 8 is an unfolding of the name of Yahweh. Verse 6 says, say to the people of Israel, I am Yahweh. And then verse 8 finishes with I am Yahweh.

So that's an inclusion. Everything in there then is to help us understand who Yahweh is. And at the heart of these verses is the idea of redemption. He's coming to set free at great cost.

God has shown himself as a God of mercy, of rescue, of salvation, of love. And it's drawing on the image that was familiar in their culture of a redeemer.

If you were an Israelite long ago and you started to run short of cash or money or way to support yourself in life, you might sell off some of your land. And then if things got even worse, you might then end up selling your home. And if things still didn't get better, you may end up selling yourself into slavery.

[ 23 : 49 ] And so you could end up with nothing. But the redeemer was a family member who could come along and pay to buy back your land, buy back your home, and buy you back from slavery.

The redeemer at great personal cost was a family member who at great personal cost would buy you back and bring you home.

So that's what God is saying about himself here. I'm the God who at great cost to myself will buy you back out of slavery and take you home into my family, into my people.

I will take you to be my people, he says in verse 7. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give, he says in verse 8. In Titus chapter 2, we read about Jesus Christ, our great God and Savior, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness.

He gives his life on the cross at great cost to rescue us out of our slavery and our guilt, out of our sin and all that has gone wrong in our relationship before God.

[ 25 : 13 ] The ultimate act of redemption is the cross. That's where we see God showing his love, his glory, and his faithfulness most powerfully and clearly.

Who's your king then? In this story of Exodus, there are two kings. The one who kills the children of Israel and causes them to live as slaves. The one who frees the children of Israel, rescues them and adopts them as his family.

Yahweh then is the invitation to us to come to the good king, not to live under the slavery of false gods, of money, or sex, or power, or the approval of other people or whatever it is that we might find meaning in, but to come to the true king with whom we can live freely and joyfully as his children.

The last thing quickly is God of missional love. God is showing his redemptive heart. He cares about the nations. Through this great act of redemption, which has been played out on a global scale, the nations of the world, Pharaoh and the people of Egypt and the people of Israel are beginning to see that God is the true God who rescues and saves.

And so we begin to see that God has a heart to make known his redemptive heart amongst all the nations of the world.

[ 26 : 49 ] God wants the nations to know of his glory and goodness. Mission is not just something God does, but mission is in the heart of God. It's part of who he is. He is a God who loves to bless and save.

And we know that God is still on mission in this world and he still uses his people to display his glory and goodness to the nations, to the world around us.

God wants to be known as Savior and Redeemer in Partick, in Hellensboro, in Bear's Den and all the way across the world. We know that mission might mean going across the globe, but often mission just means going across the road or across the office to your neighbor.

to your friend, to your colleague, to begin to tell them something of the good news of Jesus Christ. So it's great to be here this evening and to hear just what's been said about how Crow Road is still a church on mission, that you're still a people on mission.

Do you know that only 4% of Christians find it easy to be evangelists? Okay, so 96% of us really struggle to talk openly about Jesus with those who don't know Him.

[ 28 : 10 ] Very few of us are natural, gifted evangelists. So I really want to just encourage you to think about God's heart for people, that God has a mission, and that you're part of that mission, and to think about how can you join in God's mission, especially if you are someone who struggles to verbalize what you believe or who's nervous about speaking out.

I've got a friend in Glasgow, in Edinburgh, sorry, so there's an Edinburgh story. I've got a friend in Edinburgh who was arrested, many years ago he was arrested one night, and he was taken into custody, and he was covered in head, from head to toe in blood, and not his own blood.

And he knew he was going to be incarcerated for a very, very long time. And as he was being led into the cells in handcuffs, a police officer ran up to him and handed him a Gideon Bible.

That was it. Door slammed, locked, lying there. He fell asleep. And as he slept, he had a dream, and in the dream he heard a voice that said, I will take you from the miry pit, I will set your feet on a rock, and I will put a new song in your mouth.

And he had no idea what was going on. He'd never heard those words before, he didn't know where they came from. But they stuck in his head. A few days later, he appeared in court and then taken to prison.

[ 29 : 41 ] And when he's in prison, he opens up the little red Bible he'd been given. It falls open at Psalm 40. I will lift you from the miry clay, I will put your feet on a rock, and I will put a new song in your mouth.

The impulse of one man in a police station to suddenly hand a Bible to somebody in the most awful of circumstances, God used that moment to change somebody's life forever.

Simple things, simple ways that you can be part of God's mission in this world. Give a book, give a Bible, share a podcast, extend an invitation, eat with people, listen to their story, be kind to them, share good news in whatever way you can.

Yahweh, of course, is Jesus. Jesus says, I am, I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world. He takes all that Yahweh is and he says, this is true in me.

Jesus is the God who comes to redeem, to save, to bring us home. And we know that God sends Moses to Pharaoh to say, let my people go, set them free.

[ 30 : 57 ] Why? So that they will worship me. And so above all, what God is doing is he reveals himself to us as Yahweh, he is inviting us to come and know him as a God of love and mercy that we will worship and praise and adore.

God. We want to tell other people how good God is but we also want to tell God how good he is.

We want to tell other people that we love God but we also want to tell God that we love him, worship him, trust him and adore him.

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