

A God Who Speaks & Saves

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[0 : 00] Let's pray together as we come before the Word. Lord, as we come to your Word, we ask that you would grow our understanding of who you are and that you would also grow within us love for you.

Amen. Well, in 49 BC, Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon and he committed himself and his troops to civil war and to either glorious victory or utter defeat.

He said, let the die be cast as they cross across the river, committing his coup to the fickle fates.

But in our text tonight, 1,400 years earlier, Israel stood ready to cross the Jordan River and they stand there fully aware of their parents' attempt to cross and that it was a disaster.

And they also face their own defining moment of victory or defeat. But their leader, Moses, he has a different hope for success than casting the die.

He doesn't lean on tactical genius. He doesn't lean on luck. He leans with wholehearted trust on his living and powerful God. Deuteronomy 6 reveals that there's so much more to life than just hoping for the best and seeing how it all shakes out.

[1 : 17] Those that hope in Yahweh, unique and powerful, rely on a God who speaks and saves, a God that has a plan and a path for his people.

And so, Moses' parting words spelled out here in Deuteronomy are not just like a dramatic quip that sounds good when it goes down in the history books. Rather, these words transmit the voice of this living God that Moses trusts in.

So, what does this speaking God have to say? Well, when Jesus was asked that, he answered with verses 4 and 5. Verses 4 and 5 capture the heartbeat of this book.

They capture the thesis of the Bible. And so, we're going to anchor our attention in those two verses this evening. And it's in two points. The first point is one God. That's verse 4.

And the second point is one love. And that's verse 5. Easy to keep track of. So, let's take a look now at one God in verse 4. And this is what verse 4 says.

[2 : 21] Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Hear, O Israel. And we're going to hear this again and again through the book of Deuteronomy.

And it's a call to attention. Now, if we feel misunderstood, I might say, you're just not hearing me. And when my children disobey me, which is every day, I say, didn't you hear anything that I just said to you?

And when God says hear, he means these same things. He means understand. He means listen.

Understand that God is speaking. God, who reveals and creates and changes things with his words, whose speech is the building block of all creation, of all space and time.

Listen, because if that God has something to say, it demands attention. It demands obedience.

Hear, O Israel. The Lord.

Lord here is actually the word Yahweh. It's God's proper name that he gives to his people. If you think about what names are about, they're about identity. The first step in any relationship, if it's going to progress at all, is exchanging names.

[3 : 35] You have to know who it is that you're talking to. When Yahweh gives his name to his people, that's an invitation. He says, know me. This is who I am. After all, the word God can mean anything to anyone.

God can mean fate, as Julius Caesar thought of it. God can mean the God that I need to discover within myself or the various gods in world religions. But there's only one Yahweh.

Yahweh has a story. He has a track record. He's the one that made everyone and everything. He's the God that called Abraham out of the land that he was in. He's the same God that delivered Israel from slavery in the Exodus.

And this God, Yahweh, he's on a mission. He has a mission to gather a people, to gather us back to him, and through those people to gather the world back to himself.

It gets even better than this, though. He gives us his name because he is our God. That's an interesting pronoun. Did you notice that?

[4 : 40] It's possessive. We belong to God. He belongs to us. It implies commitment both directions. What a thing to call the creator of the universe ours.

And to think that like a father to a child, he says, that's my daughter. That's my son. They're mine. This is not a God.

This is not just the God. Just an ethereal notion. This is our God, Yahweh. Finally, the Lord is one. Literally, Yahweh, one. This is not about counting. It's more like, if you're into math, one over one, or 100%. So, it's not a statement of order.

It's not even a claim. It's not a comparison. It stands as a singular fact. To deny Yahweh is to deny reality. Yahweh stands wholly unique in person and power.

[5 : 43] There is no other. Yahweh is one. But his oneness goes further than that. When someone talks about, we hear this a lot these days, they talk about us being one nation, or we're one with the essential workers.

What they're talking about is unity of purpose. And Yahweh is one in this way as well. His singular mission is unshakable. Yahweh has set out to redeem and to gather and to save a people.

He saves them so they will delight in Him and know Him. That they will display His goodness to a watching world, and then that world will be gathered and saved and also come to know Him.

It was Yahweh's one purpose to rescue fallen humanity from death. He promised and swore it before anyone had obeyed Him or known Him. And He will not swerve or waver from that one purpose until it is complete.

He is who He is. Yahweh is one. Now, if you accept what I've just gone through there, if you accept that this is the story of the world, that we live in a world where there's a God named Yahweh, and He has claimed for Himself a people, and He has a plan for that people, and He's gathering and saving them, and that He's the Lord of all without a rival.

[7 : 01] If all of that is true, it's going to have some implications for your life, isn't it? And the Bible describes the correct response to this story.

to this knowledge of who God is. And that correct response is love. This is our second point, one love. I know it sounds like a Bob Marley song. That's not really what I mean, though.

What I mean is whole love, 100% without reservation, one in purpose, just like Yahweh's commitment to us. This is what verse 5 talks about.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

Listen, Yahweh, our God, the one committed to saving you, wholeheartedly commit yourself back to Him.

We are never expected to take the first step towards God. God, in the Bible, always takes the first step towards us. He reveals who He is and what He has done, and then we respond.

[8 : 06] I don't know if you know this, but the Ten Commandments don't begin with a command. They begin with this, who God is and what He has done for us. It says, I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt and out of the land of slavery.

Therefore, if all of that is true, the God that saves you and loves you, live this way. But love is also an interesting word to choose. And we just heard about Yahweh as being unique and powerful.

And so, we might be thinking, like, watch out. Like, don't get on His bad side or else. And it's true that God is fearsome in many ways.

But it's also clear that God has loved us first. God has made us. God has set out to save us from ourselves. And our love is reciprocal.

We love Him because He's first loved us. But even more than that, God is worthy to be loved. And so, like a masterpiece in an art museum, He is lovely.

[9 : 15] Yahweh is intrinsically beautiful. He's captivating. He's magnificent. All else in our lives and in all the created world and outside of it, all of it pales in comparison to who He is.

He's an object worthy of the whole human heart, soul, and might. I like to think of this as the adoration of a new parent towards their baby or of a newlywed towards their spouse.

And it's that adoration coupled together with the dedication of an Olympic athlete in training. The aligning of a whole life, a whole purpose to one person and to the love and understanding of them.

And so, what this verse is talking about, verse 5, this love, it's talking about everything from the quietest murmur of our inner voice to the greatest reach of everything that I can influence in the world.

And it's saying, all of that ties together and it lands on Yahweh, couples together our duty and our delight. He is everything. Verse 6 to 9 spell out what this might actually look like in our daily life.

[10:26] It says, His words are to be on our heart. That is there to be dear to us. And that we are to teach them to our kids. And so, you can imagine that from the dinner table to the sidewalk to bedtime, that who God is and what it means about our lives, it's a topic of reflection, of remembrance and even wonder that we should live in a world with such a God.

The verses go on to talk about how I bind them to my hands and how I put them between my eyes and my forehead. And the idea there is that when I reach out to act, I see God on the back of my hand, right?

All of my actions into this world are an act of love for God. Or that when I look upon the world and I understand what it's about, everything comes through God-colored lenses.

I see His story imprinted over the whole world. For some of us, that sounds wonderful, this idea that we might love God like this and know Him like this.

Although, I suspect that if it sounds wonderful to you, you might also grieve, as I do, because it brings with us this idea that we also fail terribly at this.

[11:44] We'll get back to that later. But, for others of you, this doesn't sound wonderful at all. It might actually just sound completely crazy. How could God expect such a thing of people?

And why would He? So, think of it this way. I said that God was like a masterpiece in an art museum, that He is intrinsically captivating, that He is magnificent beyond comparison.

But I have to admit that when I go to an art museum, often I'm standing in front of this famous work of art and you know you've come to the museum and you know that this is an amazing work of art and you get in front of it and you're looking at it and you know, I'm bored.

I'm just, I'm bored and I want to pull my phone out, I want to go to the washroom, I want to eat a taco, like anything, right? It's, the art doesn't grab my heart at all and it turns out that art brings out the barbarian in me, I guess.

I know that I should be in awe of this thing and too often I'm just not. And we do this with God as well, don't we? I might hear God's voice, read about who He is in the Bible, but doubt that He is truly good or doubt that He has my good in mind, that He actually cares.

[13:08] I might doubt that He is able to deliver on these wonderful promises that He has given. I might doubt that His way and His instructions are better than this thing that looks really appetizing right before me.

The end of Deuteronomy actually promises what we already know to be true in our experience, that doubt and distraction and desire are always going to sneak in and rob our love of God.

They're going to twist it or steal it away from us. So, what's the answer then? Well, I can promise you this, the answer is not just trying really hard to love God and do the right thing.

I don't know if you have ever loved someone before but that type of love doesn't work very well.

That's not how love works, just trying to wheel yourself into doing it. No, love for God always starts from the truth in verse 4 that we talked about earlier.

Love for God is coming back to this story of who God is, what He has done, Yahweh, this person, this particular God and asking if all of these things are true about Him, what then?

[14:22] God isn't done speaking in the book of Deuteronomy and it's very good news to say that the Bible goes on from here, it doesn't stop with Deuteronomy, it goes on to talk about how Yahweh, the one that only, became a man named Jesus.

That God, Yahweh, this fearsome, incomprehensible God came down to meet us face to face and then what He did was show us what it really means to be human, what it looks like to be a lover of this magnificent God and not only that but He completed this mission that we've been talking about. He completed God's mission of gathering and saving a people by dying and dying on the cross to forgive and heal all those things that are broken inside of us, the sin that causes us to turn away from God, the one and only.

God's people stand on the edge of the Jordan but they don't roll the dice. They don't wonder what life is for. They lean into this living hope of Yahweh, one magnificent and beyond compare.

Our God speaks and saves. He has a plan and a path for His people and His crossing to save us is unstoppable. We don't have it in us to fully see or fully love but God through His Son is able to fully save and so we put our trust in Him, the one, the only, the Lord our God.
[15 : 59] Amen.