

Exodus 3 - 4

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[0 : 0 0] Hope like no other Hope like no other Reaches to me Lord, we thank you for John and ask that you will empower him now as he speaks to us that we will be open to his message and its challenge for our lives Amen When I saw my photo at the beginning it was a real inspiration to keep going to the gym They say when you look like your passport photo it's time for a holiday When I look like that I think it's probably time for the morgue Just imagine this That I get back from church just after this service and I've been broken into For those of you who have been to my house you'd wonder how would you know you've been broken into

But the doors are jarred, the locks broken and even worse than that the perpetrator's still in the house and I've been going to the gym so I quite fancy myself in this confrontation and I guess I've got four options I guess the first is knowing I keep my cricket bat in the cupboard just by the door that I get it out and set about the man and show what all the weight training in Virgin Active has done to my bodily strength I would show him vengeance my first option My second option is that I would get my phone out of my pocket and I would dial 999 and say Dear Police Scotland probably be a bit more hasty than that please could you send someone round I'm in the middle of being burgled and that would be justice getting what they deserve Thirdly perhaps I'd trap them in the kitchen and I say you know you really shouldn't be doing this this is my house not yours this is my things not yours please leave and we'll say no more about it that would be mercy the perpetrator wouldn't get what he did deserve but what if I did this

I said excuse me Mr. Perpetrator his name actually led to this crime and I said do you know I can see you're under a pretty difficult you're having a pretty difficult time why don't you just sit on the sofa and I'll have a quick tidy up and then we'll share my M&S; microwave meal for one and we'll watch the football together and then perhaps we'll have an afternoon snooze which is really what Sunday afternoon's for and then perhaps you could come back tomorrow and we'll have breakfast and do you know I've got a spare room why didn't you just move in and perhaps we can hang out together that would be grace that he would get something that he absolutely doesn't deserve what we looked at at the opening video unmerited favour God's unmerited kindness towards us that the perpetrator did nothing to deserve it and yet you pour out grace into his life as we come and land in

Exodus 3 and 4 today the absolute passage hinges on this kind of grace on the fact that God has dealt far more kindly with Moses than he deserves that God has reached out to Moses and done for Moses what he doesn't deserve the big headline of these passages is this God steps forward in grace God steps forward in grace God repeatedly deals more kindly with Moses and his people than any of them deserve and this is very different to people's conception of God that if people think about God at all he's some kind of headmaster like an evil version of Rosemary who sits in the sky and waits for us to trip up so that then he can call us up and give us detention and punish us that he's some kind of cosmic scorekeeper that we're trying to keep the good stuff outweighing the bad but what we see revealed in this passage is that he's kind and he's gracious and he's repeatedly stepping forward towards us treating us far more kindly than we deserve so if you've got a Bible please turn with me to Exodus chapter 3

Exodus is the second book of the Bible if you're not used to dealing with the Bible then the big numbers they're the chapters so you're looking for big number 3 and we're going to start reading in verse 1 which is a little number 1 you might need your reading glasses for and Moses' life has been one of two halves when we dip into Exodus 3 he's about 80 years old is anyone here 80?

[5 : 16] exactly 80 close to 80 Gordon and Finlay about their kind of age and it's been a life of two halves 40 years spent in Egypt 40 years in Midian 40 years as the son of a Pharaoh 40 years looking after some sheep and we meet Moses and the one thing you'd say about his life is that it's an epic fail it's an epic fail he's a failed prince a murdering fugitive a lowly shepherd he has a broken spirit and he's in the back of beyond the Scottish equivalent of Alua and you can imagine that he's saying to himself every day if only if only I hadn't killed that Egyptian if only I hadn't covered it up if only I hadn't had ideas above my station then it might have been really different 40 years looking after sheep no way back alienated from God alienated from God's people which is always the result of sin alienation from God alienation from God's people epic fail living in the light of what might have been nothing he can do alone in the wilderness with nothing but sheep to keep him company we're at

Moses lowest moment just when he's thinking this is all there is God initiates God steps forward towards Moses in grace God steps forward towards him in the desert so let's read the first six verses together there's a sermon outline which you might find helpful says this now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law the priest of Midian and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb the mountain of God there the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up so Moses thought I will go over and see this strange sight way the bush does not burn up when the Lord saw that he had gone over to look Moses God called to him from within the bush Moses

Moses and Moses said here I am do not come any closer God said take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy ground then he said I am the God of your father the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob at this Moses hid his face because he was afraid I guess it's one of probably one of the most famous stories in the Old Testament and I think what we see is that God steps forward towards Moses and God shows his nature God shows his nature what he's like to Moses I mean here's the first thing he reveals himself as a bush I mean unless you're dead keen and green finger bushes are just quite normal God could have revealed himself as anything he could have revealed himself as the most resplendent magisterial figure that Moses could ever dream of and yet he comes as a humble bush a bush admittedly that's on fire which is always the Old

Testament symbol that God is present but a bush is pretty humble for the God who created absolutely everything in all the world including the humble shrub the second thing we see is that God reveals himself as holy he says to Moses don't come any closer because the ground you're standing on is holy ground not because this little backwater area of round Horeb was particularly sacred it was because God was present and therefore this ground is holy ground as God's absolute perfection seeps into the very surrounding area then we see that God reveals himself as faithful look at how he introduces himself I am the God of your father the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob God is saying I've been faithful to all your descent all your ancestors

I've been faithful to all the patriarchs I am the God who's been here who hasn't moved and then we see also that he's a God who is personal Moses walks up to the bush and the bush calls him by name Moses Moses Moses Moses was in a place where he thought everyone had forgotten about him where nobody cared where nobody was sending him a Christmas card and he walks up to the bush and the bush says Moses Moses that God knew who Moses was God initiated and stepped forward towards Moses all in grace that Moses couldn't find his way back to God and God's people but God steps forward in grace to find Moses now I don't know what you look for in prospective friends

[11:07] I don't know what you're kind of looking for for people that you want to hang out with but I find that someone who was humble who was not full of themselves who was leading a godly life somebody who was faithful and somebody who was personal who knew me I'd want to be their friend this is the god who meets Moses in the burning bush and says Moses Moses I'm here and I've got a job for you not because you deserve it but because I'm that gracious then god reveals shares his plan with Moses the next three verses the lord said I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers and I am convinced about their suffering so I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land a land flowing with milk and honey the home of the

Canaanites Hittites Amorites Perizzites Hivites and Jebusites and now the cry of the Israelites has reached me and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them so now go I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of Egypt I don't know as you read that but it seems a little bit repetitive doesn't it it seems that God is almost saying the same thing twice look at verse 7 and look at verse 9 there's not a great deal of difference there that God reveals his plan that he's come down to give his people an inheritance seen the misery he's heard them crying he's concerned about them and he says it twice in verse 7 and verse 9 but verses 8 and 10 are quite different in verse 8 God says I have come down to rescue my people and in verse 10 God says to Moses I'm sending you to bring my people out that's a cosmic shift isn't it that God is so gracious that he could swat the pharaoh like that and lead the people free but his grace is so sufficient that he can include

Moses in his sovereign plan to rescue his people Moses is in the wilderness with no way back and God steps forward to him in grace and reveals his nature he then steps forward to him and says I've got a job for you I've got a job for you God steps forward you think you've messed up here this morning one too often one too many black marks on your record you think there's no way back great encouragement from the first 10 verses of Exodus 3 is there's always a way back because God is always the God who steps forward says I know everything that's gone before I know all the mistakes and the mess ups I know all of the problems and the failings and I love you anyway and I'm stepping forward towards you to use you to welcome you to equip you for the work that I have well then we get to the real meat of the story you think that this is going to be the best day of Moses life new purpose a second chance a life changing mission to be the rescuer of God's people but Moses is thinking to himself where did I put my shoes because I want to run away we see don't we that God

Moses has a lot of doubts if you go to the cinema perhaps you grew up with Disney and the prince of Egypt Moses has a really impressive leader's jaw he's like beautiful or if you're a bit older and you saw the ten commandments with Charlton Heston playing Moses I mean cheekbones you could cut yourself on if you've been to see or unfortunately been to see Exodus Gods and Kings Christian Baal impressive and the opinion we have so readily is that Moses was a born leader and I think what we see here is that he wasn't he was a little bit scared God's grace equipped Moses for the work to do he makes five massive excuses look at chapter 3 verse 11 with me but Moses said to God who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of

Egypt Moses says I'm not worthy I'm not worthy to go I'm a nobody I'm a lowly shepherd then look at with me at verse 3 chapter 3 verse 13 Moses said to God suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them the God of your fathers has sent me to you and they ask me what is his name then what shall I tell them Moses second excuse I don't know enough I don't know enough they're going to find me out they're going to ask me questions that I don't know the answer to look with me at chapter 4 verse 1 Moses answered what if they do not believe me or listen to me and say the Lord did not appear to you Moses says I don't want to be rejected I don't want to turn up with this great message and people say I don't want to hear get out of here you're just insane look at chapter 4 verse 10

[16 : 58] Moses uses his most polite English Moses said to the Lord pardon your servant Lord I have never been eloquent neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant I am slow of speech simply says I can't do it I can't do it and then chapter 4 verse 13 but Moses said pardon your servant Lord please send someone else fifth excuse he makes I don't want to send someone else instead five massive excuses I'm not worthy I don't know enough I don't want to be rejected I can't do it I don't want to send someone else Moses steps back and we're going to see that God steps forward in grace towards him

I don't know Moses sounds a lot like me most of the time those excuses don't particularly sound alien I may have used most of them most days for different things that God has asked me to do at the very center isn't it the fear of man Moses is full of himself they all start I still looking to himself can't see beyond his own ability and his own destiny Moses steps back and God steps forward and he reminds him of six massive things look at chapter 3 verse 12 and God said I will be with you I will be with you Moses says who am I that I should go and God doesn't answer God simply says I'll be with you you're in my corner and I'm the sovereign

God in me is everything that you need as you go to Pharaoh it is not you going to Pharaoh it is me going to Pharaoh and I make Pharaoh look like an ant I'm with you then look at the second half of the verse and this will be a sign to you that it is I who have sent you when you have brought the people out of Egypt you will worship God on this mountain that's the kind of mission I want to go on one where God says not if you manage it or not perhaps you'll manage it he says when when you've done it you'll worship me on this mountain there's a real promise in that Moses I've heard your excuses this is what I'm going to do says God I'm going to promise you're on the winning team real assurance verse 13 chapter 33 verse 14 God said to Moses

I am who I am this is what you are to say to the Israelites I am has sent you God reminds Moses and reveals a bit more of his person says I am who I am my name is I will be what I will be this is a name that sums up everything we need to know about God it is the absolute meanness of God it is the foundation of everything it is the very bedrock of reality that God says I am me everyone else finds their place in this world depending on where I am but I am me there is no one like me I am utterly distinct I am eternally sufficient I am absolutely immutable I will not change I created everything I am me I am who I am there is these four letters that are called the tetragrammaton

YHWH that we sometimes translate Jehovah we sometimes use the word Yahweh it's when the word Lord is big in your Bible that's who we're talking about the God who is who he is who was what he was and who will always be what he will be the God who is absolutely everything we need who is the very center the very reason the soul and circumference of everything that it means to be anything God says I am who I am he then tells Moses a little bit more of his plan in verses 18 to 20 he starts to map out a bit more what it's going to look like that you're going to go to the elders and they're going to listen and then you're going to have them and you're going to go to Egypt and they're going to listen and I'm going to win and God's people the Israelites who have been in slavery they're going to be free and they're going to come to this place and they're going to worship me

[22 : 06] God reminds Moses of his plan then I love this bit this is probably the most dramatic bit of the prince of Egypt for me verses 2 to 9 then the Lord said to him what is that in your hand a staff he replied the Lord said throw it on the ground Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake and he ran from it then the Lord said to him reach out your hand and take it by the tail so Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand this said the Lord is so that they may believe that the Lord the God of their fathers the God of Abraham inside your cloak so Moses put his hand into his cloak and when he took it out the skin was leprous it had become as white as snow now put it back in your cloak he said so

Moses put his hand back into his cloak and when he took it out it was restored like the rest of his flesh then the Lord said if they do not believe you or pay attention to the first sign they may believe the second but if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground the water you take from the river will become blood on the ground God reminds Moses of his power and he gives them these three examples of his power the staff that goes to a snake the hand that becomes leprous and then not and then the water of the Nile becoming like blood now this isn't God showing off his party tricks these are very deliberate miracles the first one of Moses having control over the snake the actual snake is a cobra and the cobra is the symbol of the pharaoh what a great example of God's power over the most powerful man in

Egypt that Moses can put him down and pick him up whenever he wants leprosy was absolutely ravaging Egypt at this time huge leper colonies outside the big city and Moses says your pharaoh he can't deal with leprosy look at me leprosy no leprosy leprosy no leprosy leprosy no leprosy but he did that on the walk all the way to Egypt and then this idea of the Nile and the water turning to blood the Nile is synonymous with at least three of the biggest Egyptian gods Moses says I can do with the Nile whatever you want because your gods are absolutely nothing this is this is God's perseverance verse 13 Moses says pardon your servant please send someone else and God gets angry because Moses will

God will deal with Moses failings was going to go down and your brother Aaron is already making tracks to intercept you on the way to Egypt God perseveres Moses is so weak and feeble with his five excuses and God says I can overcome all of it I want to give you such a big view of me that you see nothing of yourself and have real confidence as you go to do this work what's the way to deal with the fear of man that Moses has have a big view of God I can't do it

God can I'm not able but God is sufficient this is how gracious God is in dealing with his servant God towards Moses in his grace let's just finish up shall we chapter 4 verse 18 it's all going so well but it's about to take a surprising turn then Moses went back to Jethro his father in law and said to him let me return to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are alive Jethro said go and I wish you well now the Lord had said to Moses in Midian go back to Egypt for all those who wanted to kill you are dead so Moses took his wife and sons put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt and he took the staff of God in his hand the Lord said to Moses when you return to Egypt see that you perform before

[27 : 09] Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go then say to Pharaoh this is what the Lord says Israel is my firstborn son and I told you let my son go so that he may worship me but you refused to let him go so I will kill your firstborn son at a lodging place on the way the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him but Pharaoh took a flint knife cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses feet with it surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me she said so the Lord let him alone at that time she said bridegroom mountain of God and kissed him then Moses told Aaron everything the Lord had sent him to say and also about the signs he had commanded him to perform Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites and Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to

Moses he also performed the signs before the people and they believed and when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had been their misery they bowed down and had seen their misery they bowed down and worshipped verse 24 is a real surprising turn God has gone to such great lengths to get Moses ready and then in verse 24 God says God appears because he wants to kill Moses I've been wrestling with this all week why does God want to kill Moses I think there's three things that show Moses has lingering unbelief despite the fact that God has been so gracious Moses still doubts here's the first look what he says to Jethro let me return to my people to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive saying this is a bit of a wild goose chase I don't really trust that there's anyone worth saving secondly he takes his wife and sons

I don't know if trying to do diplomacy with the greatest man with the most powerful man there is in Egypt is particularly a thing for wife and sons perhaps it indicates that Moses thinks he's just going to go back to Egypt and settle with Zipporah and Gershi perhaps that's what it is but we see later on in the story that Moses will send Zipporah and her sons away because it's too dangerous and yet he decides quick mode of transport because he's so desperate to get there lingering unbelief and then he's failed to prepare properly that even his own son does not bear the sign of circumcision to show that he's in a relationship with God it's very kind of half hearted and therefore God intercedes and says let's sort this out before we go any further do we see that even in this

God is to reveal Moses is lingering unbelief so they can sort it out before they get to Egypt and I think the best response we get from anyone is in verse 31 that Moses and Aaron come to the elders and they gather them and they hear and they believe and they see and they're amazed and they're full of hope and how do they respond they bow down that symbol of submitting of saying God you're in control and I'm not and then they worshipped him because of his grace towards them so we come into land with this that God is stepping forward towards each of us in grace as he did Moses we see the wrath of God is averted through the shedding of blood as Zipporah performs this emergency surgery on

Zipporah and yet that points even more to wrath averted from a holy God through the shedding of blood of his son and therefore God has ultimately stepped forward in grace towards us in the person of his son that God has ultimately revealed what he's like in the Lord Jesus in ultra high definition he's shown us exactly what he's like he's not only revealed his plan to us he's fulfilled his plan for us in the Lord Jesus he sent his son down to rescue his people and he did it all by himself meaning that all we can do is live in grace he saves us completely so he can stop making excuses and he sends us on mission to make much of him all by his grace

[32 : 18] God is stepping forward towards each of us this morning in his grace to reveal more of himself to give us a bigger view of who he is and what he's done in the Lord Jesus so that we might be sent out with real confidence in him God is saying I'm stepping forward towards each of you what does this look like well maybe it's this that you feel you've made a mess a catastrophic mess of life God this morning says I've stepped forward towards you in grace come to shrink that gap and bring you back perhaps you've got real fear of man and those excuses you make all the time well let's get a really big view of God and see that his grace is sufficient number three perhaps there's real lingering unbelief God's told you to do something and yet you hold back because you don't really trust him perhaps today is the day whereas he steps forward towards you in grace you step forward towards him and say yes let's do this not because

I can but because you're able but perhaps you're not a Christian here today and all this is sound very interesting but has absolutely nothing to do with you well let me say this that God is real and that he's stepping forward towards you in the person of his son so that you might know him and love him and serve him forever and he's done everything possible he's shown you what he's like in the person of his son he says my son is the exact representation of who I am so in getting to know him you see who I am that I am humble and faithful that I am holy and I'm personal and I'm calling each of you by name and he's saying I've got a purpose and a plan for your life as I did for Moses so get on board trust my grace love my son do what the Israelites did bow down and worship him why don't we just have a minute silence and then

I'll pray father god thank you that you're a god who wants to be known father I pray that you would know us this morning that you would love us this morning that you would reveal yourself more to us this morning father that you would pursue us this morning in your grace and you would use us this week all by your grace to make much of your son father come and dominate all of our lives father may we stop making excuses may we stop doubting your sufficiency but lord may all of our lives be lived bowing before you and worshipping you with everything you've given us father bless us richly we pray in Jesus name amen