

The Call of Yahweh

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[0 : 00] All right, good morning, everyone. Again, my name is Alan, and I am one of the pastors here at One Harbor Havelock. Thank you so much for being here. I hear you. That's what I'm talking about.

I got a little... Oh, yeah, rock it, baby. Sorry, I was not expecting that. The other pastor, the head pastor here, Jesse Kintzer, and his family are on vacation this week, and actually the next week as well.

Well, we are definitely a church that believes in working hard and striving to fulfill the mission that we believe we're on, but we are also a church that believes in resting and resting well. So they're not goofing off.

They are resting, and we're praying that they're going to be fulfilled and energized and ready to push on all in like they always do. So if you do, remember them. Pray for them. And just like I just said, they'll be ready to go when they come back here in a couple of weeks.

Many of you were here last week, and we started a new series on the book of Exodus last week. If you're new to One Harbor, we typically preach through books of the Bible. Every once in a while, we'll stop like we did previous to the beginning of this one and just hit a series that we feel like is really pertinent to where we are as a church.

[1 : 14] But we started the book of Exodus last week, and the challenge is seeing this just history of entertainment. I'm sure many of you, if not all of us, I know I have, have watched Charlton Heston's movie, Ten Commandments, which comes on every year, I think around Easter time.

And that's just one thing we can say, well, this is just entertainment and those kind of things. It's not. This story is actually our story of redemption. It's how God saves us.

It's not just about the Israelites and how he brought them out of slavery through the Egyptians. So understanding this story helps us understand our own story.

Last week, we looked at the first two chapters of Exodus and saw God choose a people through whom he wanted to bless the world. But they faced brutal oppression, and that gave us a glimpse into how the Bible addresses the complex nature of suffering and the apparent slowness that salvation sometimes takes.

Just chew on that one for a minute. We definitely live in a microwave system where we want things done right now, and God doesn't operate all the time in that kind of timing. Having faith doesn't mean problem-free living.

[2 : 30] We also saw the surprising ways hope comes, and when it seemed God wasn't present, he was actually hearing, seeing, and knowing all that was going on with him, all the while remembering his promises.

He was working through unexplained suffering and in unexpected places and actually in unexpected people. Sorry about that. The way God rescues them from suffering and slavery is a picture and a model for how God always intervenes and rescues.

We have a God who saves, and through this we get to see how. Ultimately, all of this is introducing us to how God will rescue us through Jesus. Long before we read the famous John 3.16, you know, for God so loved the world that he gave, we are seeing that this God is a God who acts.

When we left them, God had heard, remembered, seen, and knew. What will God do? Will he be too busy staring at his phone? Every time my wife and I, Shelly, go out to eat somewhere, doesn't matter where, we will always see a couple, just two people, sitting across the table from each other, and both of them are doing this the whole time.

They never speak to each other. And to me, that is so sad. If that's you, stop it. Please, stop it. Be present with the person sitting across the table from you.

[3 : 52] That's a little side note. No charge for that one, okay? No, we serve a God who is omnipresent. I can't even be present with my kids all the time. I can't even be present at work all the time.

I can't even be present here all the time. But God is omnipresent. He's everywhere all the time. Remember that. So God just doesn't just see, hear, and know.

Our God delivers. This passage this morning comes out of Exodus 3, 1 through 9. And I'll read it. Now, Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian.

There's one thing you need to remember here. So last week we talked about Moses fleeing from Egypt. And then the very next verse, it comes back. We need to remember that this is about 40 years in between that occurrence when he fled Egypt and this thing we're talking about this morning, 40 years.

So this guy, Moses. I'm serious? I'm sorry. So Moses, Moses was more than likely, he was in his 80s at this time.

[5 : 02] That's the thing with God. He doesn't discriminate due to age. He's an equal employment opportunity specialist. Moses and Abraham were both in their 80s and 90s.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, she was an early teenager when chosen to be the mother of Jesus. So if you're sitting there thinking, well, I'm going to sail off into the sunset. I'm retiring, those kind of things, or I'm too young to be used by God.

Please put that outside. God can use every one of us here. And he will. Get back to the scripture.

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 burnt? When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, Moses, Moses. And he said, here I am. Then he said, do not come near.

[6 : 02] 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, and the God of Jacob. 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 have 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 up 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 Hivites, 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 oppressed them. Verse 8 says, I will deliver them and bring them out.

There's no bystander effect. God's not just standing on the sidelines saying, Okay, Israel, pick yourself up by your bootstrap. Let's go. No, he is wanting to intervene.

He's going to intervene. God shows himself to be a God that just doesn't hear. He acts. But there is more going on here that we really, really need to know.

[7 : 17] God wants Moses to know who he is before he tells Moses what to do. We actually want it the other way around. God wants Moses to put his confidence in who he is, not who Moses was.

Not his abilities, his heritage, his education. We want it the other way around. God wants Moses to trust in who he is and what he does.

So God starts by telling him his name. This is actually logical. You think about it. I mean, in any relationship, you pretty much start with introductions. Hi, my name is Alan. You are? We often act like when we say the word God, we're all on the same page.

But the reality is that many of us have very different ideas about who God is and what God is like. I'd say the majority in this room probably believes that God exists.

But even then, may have different ideas about him. Strict, old school, or kind of relaxed and chilled, you know, Bob Marley effect. You know, everything going to be all right.

[8 : 23] Everything going to be all right. You know what I'm saying? He's either involved or he's distant. What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

A.W. Tozer said that. It affects how we treat others, how we see the world, the purpose of existence, what really matters, how to live, and what to live for.

It flows out of our view of who God is and what God is like. But how can we know? The reality is that many of us have a view of God that isn't based in reality.

It's based on our own preconceived ideas. For many of us, God is there and we want him to meet our needs. If that's the case, then he's more like a genie in a bottle than a God.

God's existence doesn't start with us. Our existence starts with him. So how can we know the true God? Well, we actually see how in this passage. God reveals himself.

[9 : 23] He wants us to know. He doesn't want us worshiping stuff or creatures or money. He wants us knowing exactly who he is and what he's like. We don't define God.

God defines God. God actually wants to be known. Here we see God introduce himself and give us massive insight. He isn't just giving info for the sake of info.

This knowledge is to be the rationale, the foundation for all that comes next. So number two, we see God wants knowledge of who he is to be the reason we trust in him.

God tells Moses his name. He's God, but he has a name. He is God, but he wants to be in relationship. I am who I am or I will be who I will be.

Now, if you're like me, then you're like, okay, thanks. That was a bit confusing. But it does get clearer as we keep reading. In verse 15, it says, God also said to Moses, Say this to the people of Israel, The Lord, Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.

[10 : 31] This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

God tells us his name here. And it's not just God. It's Yahweh, which is the same root of the word I am.

So basically, God says, I am that I am, and you can call me Yahweh. In the history of translation, the Jewish people began replacing the divine name Yahweh with Adonai, or the Lord, out of respect and a desire not to take God's name in vain.

And so most English translations have continued this tradition, translating Yahweh, the divine name, as the Lord. But God says, This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered.

This divine name, Yahweh, meaning I am that I am. Back then, it mattered what your name was.

The name told a story. It's why God often renamed people after experiences, like changing Abram to Abraham, which means father of many nations.

So God's name tells us who he is at the core of his existence. I am what I am. I will be what I will be. Maybe it sounds confusing, but it speaks to his unchanging nature, his stability, what he is, he will always be.

[11 : 52] This is the God who can be counted on, who isn't one way today and another way tomorrow. He is who he is. It also speaks to his eternal existence.

This I am has always been. He was, he is, and evermore will be. It also speaks to him as the source and wellspring of all existence.

Yahweh is, period. Period. Anything else that exists, exists only because of Yahweh, because he was first. That's a lot to take in.

And to be sure, it means far more than all of this. J.A. Motier said, I am who I am, is without a doubt an enigmatic statement and conceals at least as much as it tells.

In other words, it's infinitely mysterious and leaves an endless abundance to be explored in this God. This name shows us God's transcendence, but again, the name also welcomes us into his eminence, his personal nature.

[12 : 56] The very fact that God gives us his name means that he invites us to know him. We'll never fully comprehend him, but he welcomes us to learn about him and enter into a relationship with him.

But most of us don't think that way. We use far more impersonal names like God or the Lord, which is how servants talk to masters. But it seems God was introducing himself in a much more personal way.

This is a God who is completely beyond us. His holiness can't be approached. And yet a God who reaches out to us, who appears in the burning bush and gives us his name so that we can have a relationship with him.

So when we look at who asks us to obey him or follow him, we know that the call comes from Yahweh, the transcendent God who draws near to us. But the how in how God delivers is such a surprise.

You know, if it were me, I would be like striking Pharaoh down with lightning or whatever the case may be. But nope, he's doing it by calling Moses. The way God usually accomplishes his purposes in the world is through people that he calls.

[14:04] You and I. This is one of the most famous stories of God calling someone. And there's a lot we can learn about God, about ourselves, about what it looks like for God to call us to be a part of his purposes.

God doesn't just show up to say hi. He shows up to call. He has a purpose. And he issues an invitation for Moses to join him in that purpose.

Some of you are new to following Christ. This call is happening to you. You're being called.

However, what follows God's declaration, who he is, and his call of Moses is a painful conversation between God and Moses.

God giving clear direction and Moses raising doubts and fears. It's not just helpful for us to know who God is and what he's like. Through this story, we get to see who we are and what we're like. You and I, we're just like Moses. Absolutely just like him. God's people, you and I, we're prone to doubting God's promises. Exodus 3, 10 through 22, goes on like this.

[15:11] Come, this is God talking to Moses. 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.

Then Moses said to God, if I come to the people of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you and they asked me, what is his name? What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I am who I am and he said, say this to the people of Israel.

I am has sent me to you. God also said to Moses, say this to the people of Israel. 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.

This is my name forever and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob has appeared to me saying, I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey and they will listen to your voice and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, the Lord, the God of the Hebrews has met with us and now please let us go a three days journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.

[16:49] But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it and after that he will let you go and I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians and when you go you shall not go empty but each woman shall ask of her neighbor and any woman who lives in her house for silver and gold, jewelry and for clothing.

You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters so you shall plunder the Egyptians. Man, what a speech. What a speech. What a promise.

If you and I were Moses we would have been like yes, let's do it. I was born for this. Right? I was rescued for this. Nope, not Moses.

Off the back of who God is Moses says but who am I? Now it's easy to make fun of Moses.

Obviously he's not here to defend himself. But this isn't just Moses' problem.

It's one we share, we all share. We don't just define God by who we think he is. We define God's power based on how powerful we perceive ourselves to be.

[18:03] We want God to be God but we limit him to being like us. Before God ever convinces the Israelites of Pharaoh or Pharaoh, he has to convince Moses.

It's painful to listen to but good for us too. Moving on in Exodus 4.1 this is same same conversation happening here.

Then Moses answered but behold they will not believe me or listen to my voice for they will say the Lord did not appear to you. God proceeds to show him two amazing signs that will convince the people that God has sent him and even tells him that if those don't work he can turn some water into blood.

So of course now Moses is ready to go right? Nope. Verse 10 says but Moses said to the Lord oh my Lord I am not eloquent!

Either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant but I am slow of speech and of tongue. So just so you're tracking let's keep up with this God says I've heard, seen, know I'm ready to deliver right?

[19 : 07] Moses says who is this again? God says it's me the God who made the world the creator of the universe. Moses says they won't believe me. God says I'll do a bunch of crazy signs through you you Moses says I have a speech impediment.

One last time God says then the Lord said to him who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind?

Is it not I the Lord? Now therefore go and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak. God says you are the way you are because I made you that way.

It's not about you it's about me just trust me. So what do you think Moses does? But he said oh my Lord please send someone else.

I can imagine God looking over his glasses you know having his eyebrows scrouged down at this point says then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said is there not Aaron your brother the Levite?

[20 : 22] I know that he can speak well behold he is coming out to meet you and when he sees you he will be glad in his heart you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do.

He shall speak for you to the people and he shall be your mouth and you shall be as God to him and take in your hand this staff with which you shall do the signs. Moses said Yahweh please send just someone else.

Now if it were me writing this you'd think it would say God's anger was kindled and there was a little burnt spot on the ground where Moses stood. Right? I mean how many times he's got to do this?

This is God audibly speaking to Moses and he keeps giving these pushbacks. It's crazy. The mercy and patience of God towards us is unbelievable.

Right? God says Moses I'll work around your insecurities. So Moses loads up heads back to Egypt to see God's people delivered from Pharaoh. Seems Like it should be easy right? But God tells Moses exactly how it's going to go down.

[21 : 29] Verse 21 says And the Lord said to Moses when you go back to Egypt see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

In the spirit of helping us understand who God is what God's like and how God saves I think it's necessary to acknowledge something that we are seeing here that many many don't like probably all of us struggle with at some point in time I know I certainly do the point is God is more sovereign than we are comfortable with God says I make people mute I will harden his heart this isn't a tug of war between God and Pharaoh God is going to do whatever God wants and Pharaoh will do what God wants Pharaoh was worshipped like a God but God is going to show all of Egypt and Israel who is really in control watch I'll even harden his heart the man that people worship as a God I'm going to harden his heart this is God showing us that he is sovereign which means he is in control he's in control makes a lot of people very uncomfortable

I know a few months ago when little Molly Swanner died a terrible accident I sat there in that church in Charleston South Carolina and looked at that little casket and was like why why God she was such an innocent little girl always had a smile on her face just loved God something that I struggle with God isn't like a peer that we can negotiate with he's God his ways and his thoughts are beyond the universe better than ours makes us want to wrestle through God's sovereignty and man's responsibility this God's will versus free will kind of thing I wrestled for a long time thinking my will is more important than God's which resulted in a lot of pride and insecurity then I looked over my shoulder and realized that the story of my life wasn't me in control it was God God was leading and intervening rescuing me using me in spite of me trying my best to wreck his plans for my life we all like to think how much we are in control of not only our lives but

God too many of us think he is he is like a political figure where we can hold him accountable for his actions by voting him in or out of office we don't have tons of time to spend on this today but I reckon some of us in the room are like me let me encourage you to look over your shoulder look over your shoulder look at how God has rescued!

you over and over and over again however God's sovereignty isn't the only thing on display if you focus on God's ability to harden Pharaoh's heart well that doesn't seem fair but you're going to miss the love of God that's coming you will not truly understand continuing on verse 22 says then you shall say to Pharaoh thus says the Lord Israel is my first born son and I say to you let my son go that he may serve me if you refuse to let him go behold I will kill your first born son so if you can't see the foreshadowing here you might need to go back to high school English okay God is more loving than we could ever comprehend the intentional death of the first born son is a terrible terrible fault but we serve a God who knew what he was doing and the story he was writing and he knew where this was heading

[25 : 25] I want to quickly read a story that comes much later actually thousands of years later than this actually took place but ties all of this together it's another man of God but much much different in the New Testament John chapter 18 1 through 8 says when Jesus had spoken these words he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley where there was a garden which he and his disciples entered now Judas who betrayed him also knew the place for Jesus often met there with his disciples so Judas having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees went there with lanterns and torches and weapons then Jesus knowing all that would happen to him came forward and said to them whom do you seek they answered!

Jesus of Nazareth Jesus said to them I am he Judas who betrayed him was standing with him when Jesus said to them I am he they drew back and fell to the ground so he asked them again whom do you seek you got a picture of this these guys are laying on the ground he asked them who are you seeking and they said Jesus of Nazareth Jesus answered I told you that I that would happen to him he was being asked to do more than just give a speech he was being asked to go to die it wouldn't be the death of someone else's son but his own how did Jesus respond not with a painful begging of God to pick someone else but with a painful prayer briefly asking if there was another way and then declaring God's will be done he goes out willingly and knowingly but that's not all when he said I am he they all drew back and fell to the ground what's going on here whom do you seek I am that I am I exist I'm not just the God who was I'm the God who is I am that I am so let these men go here we see thousands of years later the I am the God who's both transcendent and personal but he's not in a burning bush he's put skin on and he's come to finish this battle with the true Pharaoh death and sin he's come to set his people free how does God save not just by hardening Pharaoh's heart but by dying for us and giving us new hearts through Jesus the way that we end this morning is by seeing Moses and Aaron what God kept telling Moses to do it's a beautiful outcome finishing up chapter 4 28 says and Moses told Aaron all the words of the

Lord with which he had sent him to speak and all the signs that he had commanded him to do then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people and the people believed and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction they bowed their heads and worshipped hope comes when we put our confidence in God's love the painful back and forth we watched with Moses and God was all because of Moses inability to hope in God!

God doesn't say Moses you got this God says I got this I will be with you I am sending you they will listen to you you will plunder them Moses was putting his hope in who he was not in who God is who am I versus the I am God is not going to set his people free because Moses is great we obviously see that God is going to set his people free because he is great and when God's people get this when they get this when they understand this it changes everything God remembers us God cares for us God knows us when we know that God hears and sees and that God is acting we respond in hope field worship God is at work and it's going to be!

[29 : 50] so as we respond today if you hear and not yet a Christian the amazing thing is isn't that he can harden Pharaoh's heart the amazing thing is that he can soften our hearts you are not the most important person in your story get over yourself God is but he wants to know you wants you to know him and he's calling you to himself and for a purpose bigger than yourself and that may be a hard pill to swallow but I assure you that when you stop looking at yourself in the mirror and start looking over your shoulder you can't help but notice God at work in your life you may not want to admit it but the fact that you are here today should actually mean something if you're here today and you're already a Christian you're already a disciple of Christ well maybe some of you are thinking well I'm sure glad I'm not like that guy how often do you and

I do the same thing we read of what God can do and we instantly think that it would be possible if we were someone else some of us in the room have pulled a Moses and asked God to pick someone else I've done that I've done that is that what we really want is that what you really want do you really want God to move on from you to someone else do you want to hear some of them stepping out in faith and seeing God come through I mean how amazing is that that the God of the universe the I am wants to use you stop looking for excuses and begin to trust a sovereign God whose ways are way better than any of our wildest dreams we get to do that as Christians today we come to celebrate that Jesus is greater than Moses aren't you glad that Jesus wasn't a reluctant and afraid person aren't you glad that he boldly went to the cross for us now we get to honor him by taking communion we get to toast him in our hearts and remind our souls that we have a God who wasn't just the God who was he's the God who is and forever will be he's the great I am who put skin on and allowed himself to die for us so that his people you and I could be set free dear God we're just so thankful that your patience and enduring love is steadfast and true and non-ending I know in my own life I have asked you to pick somebody else I have tried so many different ways to sabotage your plans in my life and I'm just so thankful that you never gave up on me God I pray that the truth would be saying for everyone here today that we would be a people who are bold and courageous and willing to accept the call to fulfill what you have ordained for our lives your ways are way better than anything we could ever dream of and I pray that we would be willing to raise our hands to get on the ride and ride it to the end God if just thankful that people that may not know you as Christ and Lord and Savior God that you are calling them be with them this morning God help us to never forget who you are help us to never forget what you've already done you paid away you bridged the gap between yourself and us as sin created so thankful!
You! You!