Exodus 3:15 God also told Moses, “Say this to the Israelites: ‘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 this is how I am to be remembered from generation to generation.’

I am going to guess that this history of the Lord is extremely familiar to all of us. It is one of those favorite histories of the Old Testament, you know, Moses and the burning bush. We would all have to admit it is an awesome history and I am going to guess there isn’t a one of us here who wouldn’t wish, if it were possible, that we could have been there and witnessed this wonder of God.

Yet all too often the focus of this history is on Moses. How he got there, what God said to him, his fickle excuses and so on. In truth, that is a very worthy and information packed thing to contemplate, if you wanted to learn of the weaknesses and foibles of mankind. Without doubt, Moses shows them all. Seriously, if you are going to study this text and focus on Moses the conclusion had better be that Moses was not in any way qualified to go and do this task.

So we are not going to focus on Moses. Today we are going to focus on the Lord our God. Do you realize this is the first extended revelation of God that we have? Oh, it is true, God has appeared to some other rather famous patriarchs. Like Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In each instance, God made promises and covenants or God came and protected, guided and helped his faltering servants out. Yet these theophanies, these appearances of God, were not necessarily revealing about or concerning God. Again we heard promises. We saw God protect his servants or in some way act to accomplish is will. We learned bits and pieces about God. We learned a little bit of his might and knowledge. We learned that clearly He had a plan, a plan for a savior that He would bring about, but still that was pretty much bits and pieces too. Honestly, if you were to go back and reread those histories of God and man found in Genesis, you would find you don’t really learn that much about God, you know, who He is and what His purpose is.

Well, today is different! Today when God appears to Moses God reveals himself. He speaks of himself and in so doing He teaches us truths of God we dare not forget. Let’s then look at our text under the theme: **THE LORD: I AM!**

So the first thing I think we need to notice is how all of this came about. Please note that Moses is just doing his job. He is out there shepherding his flock, a substantial flock that he and his Father-in-law had managed to put together and grow. Moses was out doing his job. The last thing on his mind was God. He was not seeking God. He was not looking to get closer to God or have an encounter with God. Moses was not smoking something, or chewing on something, or licking frogs or anything like that so that he could have an encounter with God. It is God who seeks out Moses.

I like to point that out because in today’s world the world likes to promote that idea of you and I seeking out an encounter, a relationship, a meeting of the minds with God. They promote all kinds of strange ideas about this: meditation, prayer, ritual, often strange ritual, drugs, etc. Most all of what is promoted is pure hogwash. Please note you are not going to find God unless that is what God wants. It’s a bit different in today’s world than Moses’ but the point of this is still important. God is the one calling the shots, God is the one who makes you his! It is not about what you want or think, or even what you feel and imagine. God is God and God is the one directing life. And keep in mind that today, since God has completed and given us His Word He says the way to find Him is through that Word and that Word will bring the Holy Spirit. So if you are seeking God outside of His Word, you are already moving in the wrong direction and what you will find is not going to be God.

So here is Moses out tending the flock when God determines that He is going to call Moses to be the leader of his people, to free them from slavery in Egypt and to serve as his instrument to reveal the wonder and glory of God. Enter the burning bush. Somewhere on the path of Moses, God causes this bush to be burning, burning but not consumed by the fire. Now, exactly how this bush was spotted I do not know. It is possible it is evening or night time and it is the brightness that brings Moses over. It is also possible that Moses is simply leading his sheep and there before him was a fair size bush all ablaze and in his way. Either way what is important to note is that this burning but not consumed bush, this wonder of wonders, causes Moses to draw closer to it because as Moses said, **“I will go over and look at this amazing sight.”**

Imagine Moses surprise when a voice calls out to him! **“Moses!”** I can just hear the voice of God booming out and Moses looking around to see who was talking to him. Again the voice is heard, **“Moses!”** It is then that Moses realizes the voice is from the bush. Moses then utters his, **“I am here,”** line. Not exactly the sharpest tack, huh? You walked to this bush, the bush addresses you by name and the best you can say is “I am here?” I think God knows that Moses, I think God knows where you are and what you are doing and more about you than even you could possibly know.

Note that God simply continues by giving directions. **“Do not come any closer. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”** Think of these things. When it comes down to God and His total Majesty, you and I can only get so close. Not only does the Lord tells us in his Word that no man can see God and live, but God makes it clear that without His Word, His revelation, you and I wouldn’t’ have a clue as to his greatness, plans, thinking or will. We are not on the same plain as God. His is far above us in wisdom, strength and actually anything that counts. We are limited, because of our sinful nature, in our ability to approach or even comprehend God. So please note that God lays out the parameter and boundaries and we need to stop thinking we are his equal or that we are somehow the ones calling the shots. Don’t overlook that God says “**Do not come any closer.”** No wonder God sent Jesus to completely reveal Himself. Jesus the God / Man and the perfect mediator of God’s wisdom and knowledge. And also note that the ground is holy. Not because of something special in the ground but holy because right here and now the presence and majesty of God is there. It is God that makes holy and no one and nothing else.

Now the next statement of God. **“I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”** Dear people, right here and now are things and marvels shown that we had no clue about. Moses is going to learn something of the being and wonder of God. It is a lesson we too should be sure to learn. God tells us “He is”… that is, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Those must have been astonishing words to Moses. Jabob, the closest one to Moses has already been gone from the world for over 400 years! But God says, “I am” their God. When we combine this with what Jesus reveals in Matt 22 the lesson is astounding. Here briefly is what these words teach about God.

First, the realm of God is eternal and thus God himself is eternal. In this case, by eternal we mean that God is timeless in his being and existence. He is not limited, constricted or hindered by time in any way but is above and really the creator and master of time. Second, in this marvel we thus grasp the power and majesty of God. God is beyond this world of ours, actually over it and the master of it. God transcends and in truth controls this world. Much of this is grasped in the name God uses at this point: “Eloheem.” This is the God of creation, the God who called things into being that were not, who made out of nothing this world and universe and us! This is God the creator, the power and the wisdom of all that was and is and will be. This is the God above and beyond our ability to grasp and fathom. This is the God whose very presence brings fear as we see in the reaction of Moses as he hid his face for fear of God.

Third, God is a personal being. He tells us I am. He is a being who has engaged in relationships, signs, wonders and marvels. He is a God who acts and who has plan and direction. He is a God who knows things, like Moses’ descendants and even Moses himself. And as we look further at the words of the text before us we grasp that God hears, has empathy, is aware of His people and the world. And note that it is God’s desire to deliver, to save his people and bring about his purpose in the direction and history of the world. All of this is because God is and because God is almighty and wise.

But the thing that most impresses, the thing that Jesus points to in these words, is the most awesome of things. In Matthew 22 Jesus points to these words as proof of life after death, as proof that there is a place where we will go to be with God. Jesus says, **“Have you never read what was spoken to you by God; I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”** Though those men were gone over 400 years they were alive. They were with God. They were enjoying his presence, wonder and might. They were alive and being served by this awesome and wonderful God of ours. God is the God of the living! The living who leave this world in faith, enter into the realm and eternity of God there to dwell with him, to serve him and to be served by him.

What else do we learn of God? Contemplate these words of our text, verse 10, **So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."** Those words don’t seem that extraordinary but they reveal something about how God choses to work. In truth, God could have gone down and rescued all on his own. He could have visibly and in person showed up, taken command and saved his people. But God knows and understands more than we could ever grasp. God knows that the best way to impact and affect people is through someone like Moses. We get a small grasp of this reality when we look at the world right after the Fall into sin. Though God was a visible and present force, did that stop people from doing what they wanted? Did the world blindly follow God then or did they continue and persist in lives of sin and lives contrary to all that God is. Or think of the Tower of Babel. The people of the world, every one of them, knew the truth of the flood and the truth of God and yet they rebelled and stood against the Lord. It is clear that God knows what is best and what will best work to bring about faith and the salvation of souls. And what He knows leads Him to choose men to do his work and serve the purposes of his will.

So God calls Moses to be his voice, his spokesman, the instrument through which God will work. Moses is full of problems and weakness. That is seen in just the fact that Moses tries to excuse himself from the work and call of God. Yet God persists in using Moses. And recognize that Moses will be successful because God is with Him, because God will be the power and direction of what will be. That’s the point of verse 12, **“And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the 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."** In these words God is pointing out to Moses that because of his presence and help, his power and wonder, the people will be brought out and the people will worship Him on the very mountain they are right now standing before. This is not a hope, not a dream, not anything but the sure pronouncement of God that His will is always done and accomplished in just the way and manner He desires.

There is yet one more thing that we need to learn. It is the new name of God that is given here, the name that reveals God all the more to us. Verse 14 says, **“God said to Moses, "I am I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"** Here is the name of God that tells us of his grace, love, mercy and awe. Here is the name of God that proclaims his goodness and care for us, the God who desires to save and deliver. This name of God is actually a verb form which can mean “I was, I am, I will be.” It expresses God’s eternity and marvel. It’s normal in English for us to translate this name always as “Lord” and the other name, the Eloheem one as “God.” But recognize this is a new revelation of God.

The wonder of this name is brought forth in later verses. When Moses must go back and get a new copy of the stone tablets and have the covenant of Israel renewed it is God who reveals the further wonder of this name. Gods says in Exodus 34:6-7 **"The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."**

Perhaps the most important thing for us to grasp is that this name of God is the one Jesus claims for himself. In John 8 as Jesus is dealing with unbelieving religious leaders he eventually says to them, **“Before Abraham was, I am.”** Note that the Jews became so incensed at this statement that they were going to kill Jesus right then and there, but Jesus miraculously walks away. They understood, that Jesus had just claimed to be this saving, gracious, righteous and eternal God. Yes, Jesus and the Father are One!

In truth we could speak of more of what these history of God reveals to us of the majesty, marvel and grace of God, but let this suffice for now. Let us simply know that God is God, that He acts and moves for our good and salvation in the ways that He knows are best and good. Know that this God is now fully revealed in Jesus our Lord and Savior. You want to fully know this God, then know Jesus and know God’s Word backed by the power and majesty of Jesus. This is our God who saves. This is our God who gives eternal life and the gift of heaven. This is the changeless, the eternal, the gracious God who has come and has delivered us from the threats of sin, death and the devil. Our God who saves, because His is good and filled with love. Hear and believe in this God. Amen.