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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
September 6, 2020  
14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Romans 11:33-36; Matthew 16:13-20

Hymns: 221:1-3,6; 473:1-2, 5; 364:1-3,6-7; 50:2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Exodus 6:2-8

And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I *am* the LORD. <sup>3</sup>I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by My name LORD I was not known to them.* <sup>4</sup>I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. <sup>5</sup>And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. <sup>6</sup>Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I *am* the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. <sup>7</sup>I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup>And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you *as a heritage: I am the LORD.*' "

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Ignorant of the true God

Some people say, "What you don't know can't hurt you!" Really? Others say, "Ignorance is bliss!" That kind of bliss inevitably ends in disaster. I guess my favorite is actually a little harder to follow. "He who knows not and knows not that he knows not, knows not! He who knows not, BUT knows that he knows not, know a lot!"

Man is born with a spiritual ignorance that is dangerous beyond words. Some go through their entire lives blissfully ignorant of God and in the end this ignorance brings destruction. It is certain that this ignorance of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, this ignorance WILL hurt you! Others realize their ignorance, but on their own they can only grope about in the darkness of this world hoping that they might stumble upon the truth of God. At least they recognize the ignorance that afflicts them. There is a natural knowledge of God, a knowledge that God's creation screams out to the world so that man should hear and seek after God. (Acts 17:27) However, this knowledge of God doesn't present the truth about the God or the proper answer to the question Jesus posed to His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15)

Jesus' question concerning His true identity is actually the same question addressing the same truth the Lord addressed with Moses as Moses was struggling with his God given task of leading Israel out of Egypt. People's spiritual welfare, whether that be individually or as a nation is dependent upon --

**THEME: Theme: Truly Knowing the LORD!**

At God's direction Moses had returned to Egypt and presented himself before Pharaoh demanding the release of the Children of Israel from slavery. Pharaoh's response was to intensify the terms of their bondage. In their ignorance of God and what the Lord not only could do but would do, the people turned against Moses with the accusation that all Moses had accomplished was to put a sword in the hand of Pharaoh's servants with which to kill them. So Moses returned to the Lord and asked, "Why? Why have You brought me to this people, and why have You sent me?" Even with Moses we see human ignorance overwhelming the true knowledge

of God when things get tough in this life. And this is after the burning bush incident where God revealed Himself to Moses so powerfully!

And that, my friends in Christ, happens with us all. Because of this we need to hear the truth about God again and again and again! This truth comes to us directly from the Lord Himself!

## **I. The LORD Reveals Himself to Us as the Covenant God.**

**Exodus 6:2-4** And God spoke to Moses and said to him: “I *am* the LORD. <sup>3</sup>I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by* My name LORD I was not known to them. <sup>4</sup>I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.

God addresses Moses’ concerns, as well as the ignorance of the people of Israel with a reminder of how He revealed Himself to the patriarchs, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We have a difficulty in translation in these verses. What should have been posed as a question to Moses is rather formed as a statement that doesn’t logically follow the flow of God’s revelation of Himself. God confirms here that while He appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty, didn’t He also present Himself to them as LORD? Didn’t He also make a holy covenant with them that this land in which they lived as pilgrims and strangers would be the Promised Land given to their descendants after them? Didn’t He also present Himself to them as the LORD, their Redeemer God?

God is focusing Moses, and so also Israel’s attention on His identity as their Savior. As great a truth as God’s almighty power might be, knowing God as LORD, our Redeemer, who promises life and salvation, is far greater. This is actually the part of God’s identity that is the greatest mystery for us and all mankind. This is the truth that surpasses all understanding, the truth Paul capsulized in our epistle lesson this morning.

This is the foundation of truth upon which our faith is built, upon which Christ’s Church is built. This is the everlasting truth about our God and Savior Jesus Christ. Yes, God revealed Himself to the patriarchs, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob **both** as God Almighty for

whom nothing is impossible, and also the LORD, who loved them and all mankind with an everlasting love, and so He revealed Himself to them as their Savior God. He promised them a homeland, and not just the land of Canaan, but their eternal home in heaven. This truth, this hope is grasped by faith.

This is who we know and believe Jesus to be! He is the LORD, the eternal God who has promised us life and salvation. This is the LORD's sacred covenant of peace, and His everlasting truth. So He spoke to Abraham, and in our text to Moses, and later through the other prophets. In Isaiah we read of Jesus' coming with these words:

**Isaiah 42:6-8** "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness,  
And will hold Your hand;  
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,  
As a light to the Gentiles,  
<sup>7</sup>To open blind eyes,  
To bring out prisoners from the prison,  
Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.  
<sup>8</sup>I *am* the LORD, that is My name;  
And My glory I will not give to another,  
Nor My praise to carved images.

When challenged by His critics, Jesus declared of Himself! "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.*" <sup>57</sup> *Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"* <sup>58</sup> *Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."* (John8:56-58)

Who is Jesus? He is the great I AM! He is the LORD, the covenant God! He is God Almighty come in the flesh to save lost and sinful mankind. And so He has revealed Himself to us that we might know and believe that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" (Matthew 16:16)

The Lord laid all this out for Moses as the foundation of what he was to present to the Children of Israel as they languished under their taskmasters in Egypt, so they would find comfort as –

## **II. The LORD Reveals Himself as a Compassionate God.**

Now let us consider God's involvement in this world, and the level of His care toward the people of this world. It is all too easy to fall into the negative thinking that God is limited in His compassion, and then also in His intervention in this world. Some might be tempted to think, "With all the people in this world how can God possibly be concerned with me?" I am just one of billions of people, and if God were to intervene in my life wouldn't that just ruin somebody else's life?" That is sort of where the Children of Israel were in their thinking. That is ignorance of God's grace and power, and a lack of faith. God isn't limited. He is Almighty God! Neither does He lack compassion. He knows what's going on in your life and mine, **and He cares**. Listen to what the Lord said to Moses.

**Exodus 6:5-6** And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. <sup>6</sup>Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I *am* the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

Now, please note the foundation God lays for your faith in His caring for you. **He has remembered His covenant!** What exactly is that covenant? That these people would return to Canaan and take possession of the Promised Land? Yes, but that is only the beginning! That wasn't the end and goal of God's covenant. It was a step along the way, a promise He would fulfill that was leading to the ultimate fulfillment of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that in their **Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed**. (Genesis 26:4) That promise of salvation was fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of God, our Savior who became Man, and fulfilled all righteousness, and suffered and died and rose again that we might have life in His name.

That is the depth of God's love and concern for you. He invites us to call upon His name. He expects us to call upon His name when we are in trouble, or suffering in any way. To call upon God's name, the LORD, seeking His deliverance, is part of the true worship of God. In Psalm 50, in which God is calling Israel to repent and to return to the true worship of the Lord we read: "*Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High. Call*

*upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”* (Psalm 50:14-15)

Even as we believe that Jesus Christ died for us and rose again, so we also offer to God our thanksgiving every day of our lives, especially as gather together to call upon His name. Then, in times of trouble, when there is distress of any kind in our lives, whether that is sickness, or national unrest, or family problems, or emotional distress, the Lord looks for us to call upon His name. He hears. He understands our pain. He remembers our weakness. He will deliver. **He is the LORD!** This is who He is. Has He not revealed Himself to us as Almighty God who has done all things well? Has He not revealed Himself to us as LORD Jehovah, the God of our salvation? Yes, indeed He has! And Almighty God has made this very personal.

### **III. The LORD Reveals Himself to Us as Our God.**

**Exodus 6:7-8** “ I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup> And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you *as a heritage: I am the LORD.*’ “

God is all about making promises and keeping. To the LORD this is very personal. He makes it personal. The LORD assures the people, “*I will take you as My people, and I will be your God!*” (v. 7)

This is a powerful extension of God’s grace, and of course that is grace towards an undeserving people. He takes Israel, knowing all about them, not just past and present but also future, He takes them as His people. He calls them to faith in His name. **He is their God.** All this is only possible because of the covenant of His grace that has taken sin out of the way. Jesus would be the sin-bearer to make God’s grace possible.

It remains so yet today. God has called **us** to be His people. God has established this relationship with us so that He is **our** God. This is a very personal relationship that requires faithfulness. **God is faithful!** He has a perfect record of faithfulness. His words and

promises are sure. He has kept all His promises to His people. **God gives us His Spirit that we might be faithful to Him in all our ways.** Our track record is not so good. We continue to fall into sin. We continue to promise God complete love and devotion, and yet we continue to care for our own desires, even when they are selfish and even sinful, more than our service to God. What's worse is that we think our response to God's grace and faithfulness is reasonable and good.

**And God remains faithful.** He assures us that His promises to bring us into the Promised Land of heaven is as sure and certain as when He brought Israel into the Promised Land of Canaan. Why would He do that? Because God deals with us according to His grace and not as our sin deserves. He seals the deal with the declaration of His name: I AM the LORD!

Let's now take a step back to the central thought of today's worship. Who is Jesus? Remember the question He asked the disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" Some say this, some say that. Some say a great prophet. Some say a fine example of love for us to follow. Some say a good man, maybe a great man. None of that stands up to our need of salvation. None of that forms the foundation of your faith, or the Rock upon which His Church is built. That is something more. Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" (Matthew 16:16) That confession is the rock upon which Christ built His Church, the rock upon which your faith is founded. Jesus is the great I AM! Jesus is the LORD Jehovah! Jesus testifies of Himself: "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,*" says the Lord, "*who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*"

This truth removes ignorance of God, and we are blessed to know the LORD.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.