

The God Who Is

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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 0 0] Anyway, can you turn back with me to our reading that we had from Exodus chapter 3? In particular the words in verse 14, you remember this time the Israelites people had been taken into Egypt, they'd been in Egypt for 400 years and now they were enslaved there and crying out to God for help. And Moses is not in Egypt but God is sending him to be their human deliverer, the leader that is going to deliver them by his, by God's hand. And when Moses says, well if I'm going to go down to Israel, these people aren't very favourably disposed towards me because I left in a bit of a cloud having murdered someone. What will I say? Will they listen to me? Will they believe me? Will they accept me? And God says to them, well when you go tell them that I'm the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, so they would know that. And then he says to them in verse 16, and I'm going to have to use glasses, okay, sign of weakness, old age and depressing. God said to Moses, I am who

I am. This is what you're to say to the Israelites, I am, has sent me to you. And I want to focus today on that. I want to focus for a little while on that name of God that is given. We're doing a short series on the doctrine of God, the kind of God that we have, the person of God. And I'm not going to spend a lot of time applying that truth to our lives. You know, I quite often spend a lot of time applying the Bible to our day to day living. There'll be a little bit of that, but not quite so much of that in this series. But I do think that the more we know about God, the more we will worship Him. And I don't just mean for the hour that we're here in church. I mean in our lives, you know, Romans 12 talks about offering as Christians our lives as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

And therefore the worship of our lives will be more meaningful, the offering of our lives, the giving of our lives to God who is the Lord, who's the sovereign, who's to be obeyed as our Lord and Savior, will be more intense and will be more meaningful. The more we get to know Him, the more we love Him, the more we understand His character. And I can only begin to dip into His character and to who God is, is mind blowing. And I'm hugely inadequate to do it. But even the little glimpses that were given in Scripture, I hope, will help us to worship Him better. And in many ways, a couple of Wednesdays ago at the Paralming, I really liked more people if they were able to commit to coming and praying together. And one of the things I said a couple of weeks ago was half an hour for heaven's sake. And I was encouraging the congregation and the people who were there to do four different spells of half an hour. But I've decided just to focus on one thing. And that is encouraging you to pray and to be in God's presence and to have the Bible open for half an hour on a Sunday morning, on a Sunday morning before church, before the band starts playing, before things happen. Half an hour, okay? At any point during the morning so that you come to God's house, well, it is God's house, but it's not God's house in a sense. There's nothing special about the building. But as you come together with God's people and worship, there's a sense in which you have prepared your heart and you've sought Him and you've looked from half an hour for heaven's sake. I would love that to be the case. That when we come together, that we, God will speak to us through the word and that we will be led and governed and encouraged and enlightened by Him in all that we do and in our worship.

There will be a really encouraging time, excuse me, together as we worship. See, I think the biggest question that we face in the world, the biggest question you face and I face even and we maybe don't think about it, is really if God is real at all. Isn't that significant?

And it's significant to the fact that we're here today. It's a very significant question. Do you know, does God exist? That's the biggest question really. It's the biggest question we will ever face in our lives. There isn't a bigger question than the question of the existence of God, that God is, that God exists. You see, because if you come to the conclusion this morning, which I don't suppose anyone here does, but I don't know, but certainly a lot of people outside will have come to conclusion that

He doesn't exist, that God doesn't exist, then you need to follow that up. Now you need to get on the attack with people who say that and I need to get the attack on people who say that. Not in an abusive or in an arrogant or in a troubling way, but in a gentle way. We need to ask people then, well, what is life about? What is your life about if there is no ultimate meaning and if there is no ultimate person behind this universe? If this universe is completely impersonal and you haven't been created, how did you come about? Why are you here and what is it that life is for? And where are you going and what is the point? If there is nobody governing, nobody sovereign, nobody over these things, then it's a very deep and serious question that people need to ask themselves. Now we can just choose not to and we can just choose to live our lives without purpose and without real ultimate meaning and just kind of lurch from party to ambition to marriage to life and death. And that is the deception of not dealing with that question. But if He does exist and presumably most of us have come to that conclusion here today, then that is an equally significant question because if [6 : 12] He does exist and if there is a God and if He is God, then He simply isn't the kind of God that we are. If He is God, we can't just ignore Him. And it's a hugely significant question to ask, who is He then? Who is God if God exists? Has He revealed Himself? And can we know Him? And if we can know Him, what does it mean to know Him? Well, the theme of this sermon is about the fact that God is, that God exists. It's in the name. It's in the name that He gives here to Moses. I am who I am. It's a strange name, isn't it?

I am who I am. Tell the Israelites, I am has sent me to you. Now I'm not going to go into this today, but presumably the Israelites knew that name. I think they did. We're not told that they knew it, but we presume that at least they had some knowledge of this name already.

And therefore they would know when Moses said, I am has sent me, that He was being sent from God. Now names don't matter terribly much to us. Well, maybe that's not strictly true.

Names do matter to us, but they don't have the same meaning in terms of their etymology as they did in the Bible. Names are hugely significant in the Bible and the name someone was given had a real meaning behind it. And here God is giving a phenomenal self-revelation.

He's speaking about the kind of God He has. Tell the people in Egypt, I am. I am has sent you. In the older translations translated as Jehovah. I come to recognise it as the name Yahweh or in our Bibles, it's often Lord with small capitals, L-O-R-D Lord. And John Piper, a famous Christian commentator and preacher from America says it's the most basic and the most ultimate fact that God is. God absolutely is. I am. That's what his name means. He says, I am. I exist. I live. I am. The fact that God is, Piper says, is the most ultimate of all facts. And he's really just reminding us here that He exists. That God exists. God is. He is self-existent, absolutely independent. He's completely un-originate.

[8 : 50] He hasn't been created by anybody or anything. He is. You know, it's quite difficult to think of the words to unfold or unpack that more than it reveals itself. He's inexhaustible.

He's free. He is completely uncreated. He simply exists. He is there. He is alive. I will be, he says, what I have been. I am going to be what I was in the past. I am. I live.

I exist. And therefore the important reality for us is that God doesn't exist because we believe in Him, you know, like the Tooth Fairy or Father Christmas, who exists because we have made Him exist in our own minds, or her existing our own minds. Rather, we believe because He exists. He doesn't exist because we believe, but rather we believe because He exists. Do you see the difference? The important difference is that we believe because He is pre-existent. He is there. God lives. God exists. God is. He is not someone that is a figment of our imagination, a psychological crutch for weak and impotent people. He exists.

He is real. I am who I am. There is no cause to Him. We don't look and find a beginning for Him. A first cause, a big bang. There's nothing like that for God. He simply exists.

He is eternally present. You sung about that in Psalm 1-3. Now you're going heaven, you're there. On the lie of the depths of hell, you're there. God exists. God is there. He's permanent.

[10 : 30] He's personal. And He's real. God exists. I am. Now I think briefly to apply that a little bit, we need to consider that our existence, you know, you're here. You can poke yourself.

You live. You exist. And existence points to Him, to His existence, to His prior existence. You exist today. You go up today. You live today because He lives because He exists.

We are derived from Him. We are created by Him. We are dependent on Him. But our sense, our sense of being makes sense only when we think of our being coming from Him. So it's absolutely significant and important for us to remember who He is, that He exists. And our existence depends

on Him. And it does briefly, can I say, it just reminds us of the folly and the senselessness of trying to ignore Him, isn't it? Because He exists, you know? We close the church door. We close the Bible. We plug our ears. We run away. And we think God doesn't see us. And God doesn't hear us. And God doesn't care for us, as if somehow He is limited in time and space. And if we run fast enough, if we shout loud enough, or if we close enough of the Bible and don't pray or say anything, that God somehow ceases to exist. He doesn't cease to exist because we no longer believe in Him. It makes no difference to the existence and the reality of this living of God. But at the same time, to acknowledge

Him, therefore, changes everyone and changes everything. To acknowledge that He exists, He is always there, that this God is real. Someone who is independent from us, someone who lives and exists outside of me, someone who is much, much greater than me, someone in whose image I'm made, then that also changes who we are and how we think. So He exists.

You know, there's a kind of ontological truth there that He just, He is. He lives. He's there. But it's impossible to recognize that without looking at it in context. So the name that He gives, isn't it? It's not just a blank name. This is God, Yahweh, or this is God, I am who I am. It's given in a particular context, isn't it? And that's important. Because, you know, you could have two conclusions. If God existed and you didn't really know about Him, then that could be hellish, or that could be heavenly. You know, if He's a rotten God, if His character is awful, then the fact that He is eternal and existent would be awful and would be a terrible thing. And I think a lot of people have come to that conclusion about God, without recognizing who He is and how He reveals Himself. They look at the circumstances of life. They look at their own lives and they think, well, if there is a God, He must be a brute. He must be a tyrant. He must be untrustworthy. He must be harsh. But they haven't looked at the God who has revealed Himself in context, in His name. If God who is the I am God, if God who is the I am who I am, Yahweh God, was a brute and a tyrant, this life would be hell. It would be far, far worse than we could ever imagine. We would have no enjoyment and love and grace and peace, even as rebels against God. And so we need to recognize the reality of how God reveals Himself. There's two things here, there's a lot more obviously, and we'll look at some of them over the coming weeks. There's two things here that this God who exists does. He reveals Himself in a certain context. And there's two things he does. The first is he communicates. And the second thing is he connects. So here's the God who communicates. He says to Moses, tell them, tell the people, this is who I am. I want them to know. So he's communicating with Moses and he's communicating through Moses to his people. He wants to be made known. He wants to reveal Himself to his people. He wants to talk. He condescends to come to this eternal, existing God, this

[15 : 35] I am God who is above and beyond all of creation, whose I can't find words to explain and describe adequately. This unbegun being is one who wants to communicate with us, with people.

He reveals Himself to Moses in this amazing kind of image of the burning bush. This image of the burning bush. And he reveals Himself both visually and also verbally. So he says, verbally says, Luke, tell them, I am, has sent you. He gives him the name that he wants to be shared with them. But he also reveals Himself visually, both in the flame, in this fire, this shrub that is burning in the middle of the desert, middle of a dry, dusty desert.

So it seems to be controlled and it seems to be not burning up. And through the appearance of the angel of the Lord, many believe to be simply a theophany, a physical appearance of God in the Old Testament before even the incarnation of Jesus. So he communicates and he speaks to them. He speaks to Moses. He says, Luke, this is, I am the existing God.

I am the God of all gods. And he says, I am holy and pure Moses. He says, take your shoes off. This is holy ground. Take your shoes off. And he reveals Himself as awesome, as inexhaustible, this kind of unconsumed fire. You know what it's like if you have a bonfire.

And it doesn't happen very often in Scotland, it has to be said. If you have a bonfire where everything is tinned or dry, say at a dead bush or even, well, it couldn't really be a living bush. A bush in a very dry situation, burn very quickly, burn up very quickly. If it was a living bush, it would be a lot of smoke and then burn up quickly. And that would be it. But here's this fire that draws Moses' attention because it's burning, but it's not burning up in this dry place and it could cause a huge amount of damage if it's uncontrolled.

[17 : 54] And yet it's through this that the self-contained God reveals Himself, God of holiness, a God of inexhaustible energy, a God of control, a God of mystery, a God who speaks to us.

God is personal, comes in the person of the angel of the Lord. He communicates. So God speaks. This amazing God is God who exists, also speaks. So He speaks, but He also connects with them. In verse 6, He says, I am the God of your Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. And then He goes on to say, you know, I have heard your cries. I've heard your cries. So this God who exists, this incredible God speaks intimately to the people. In verse 70, He identifies with their sufferings. I have seen your misery.

It's not a great thing for this existing, powerful being to say, I've seen it. I've seen your misery. I've heard your cry. I hear your cries. And I'm a covenant God. I'm a God in relationship with your people. And I'm a God, as He goes on to say, I'm a God who is with you. I'm a God who will provide for you. I'm a God who's going to rescue you.

I'm a God who loves you. And I'm a God who wants you to worship me. That is how He reveals Himself, connecting with His people here, connecting with Him as He reveals His name.

His name is not abstract. It's not a kind of theological floater that's going around the place. It's very much grounded in a revelation of Himself in a particular context as a God who communicates and a God who connects. And we need to remember, I think it's significant and interesting that God here reveals Himself to the existing God in the context of suffering.

[19:56] I'm a God who acts in the context of human suffering and the human need and human death. And we've come today on a Sunday of remembrance and we remember that. We remember that there continues to be relentless suffering and relentless death and relentless cries from people. And the very strong atheist argument in many ways that speaks about why does a loving God allow suffering? Begins to be answered in this kind of revelation of Himself because He makes promises to end it. He makes promises to redeem us out of it. And He is the God who exists, you know. It's not mocked by impermanence. You know, we can make lots of promises. I'll promise to help you. I'll promise to make things easier. But bang, we can be gone in a minute. And the promises are impermanent and they're not bound. They're not founded in the ability to outwork them. But here is this God who is permanent and says, look,

I will bring suffering. I have and I will bring suffering to its conclusion with all the difficulty and all the problems of that. And there's that sense of permanence and that sense of ability that He has to deal with suffering and that presence. You know, so often we put our faith and our trust in something that's impermanent that isn't going to last, that might give immediate relief or quick relief for us but ultimately doesn't provide the answer for us. There's a great film, all the folks here who know that. I don't watch many films really, but there's a film that I watch, I get, I've watched several times. It's very violent and brutal. It's called Taken. Liam Neeson, that film, plays a part of a father whose daughter goes on holiday to Paris and there she's abducted, she's kidnapped and she's taken away for prostitution by a gang and he hears and there's the phone call and he says, I'm going to, you know, I'll come and get you. I'll be there, I'm your dad.

I'll get you. I'll come back for you. And that's really the whole point of the film, isn't it, that he comes in the most ridiculous way and shoots about 9,000 people and blasts the whole of France to bits and nobody ever asks him why and eventually, you know, after 48 somersaults, he ends up on the boat that she's been taken away and the powerful moving end of the story is him standing in front of her and, you know, she says, you came for me, dad, you came for me. Now that's a great picture of humanity's need. As humanity looks for someone to come and rescue them. You came for me. And the reality is that it put in a hugely imperfect way, of course, it speaks of our longing for both rescue and the permanence of a parent, a loving parent who will always be there. You know, that's one of the more permanent things for most of us in life as a parent, isn't it? Not always, but sometimes. But we find that stability in that. And yet God says, even though your mother and father forsake you, which ultimately they all will through death and not deliberately, of course, necessarily, but he says, I am there for you. And I come back and get you. And that helps us when things are difficult. And when we're going through battles, because he connects with us. And I just want to move on just before we close from this verse, because in this verse, he communicates to us and he connects with us in this revelation of his existence that he is always, he's not just a kind of, he's not just that divine clock maker that's set the world in motion and he's there kind of hanging out, you know, from a distance looking on and seeing how it's working out. He's not that kind of God. It's not that he just simply exists floating in the ether somewhere. He's just God who communicates with us and who connects with us. And can I just move on? Because it seems impossible not to remind us that his name is the name that becomes flesh as well. Because there's more in this name of God, I am

name of God in the revelation of Scripture. Because many of you and many people as well, give me something concrete. Give me some, so I can't see, I can't believe in a God who simply exists. No matter how much he connects or communicates in that way, I can't understand him. And we never truly will fully understand God, of course. But we question His goodness. We can't understand His apparent silence to our cries.

We wonder what He's doing in our lives and often people choose to reject Him on the basis of their experiences in life. Now that's a massive judgment call. I'm not saying that people do it cheaply in any way. Sometimes they will, maybe sometimes they don't. But we need to ask the question, are things as they seem? Does he not love you? Is he not a real God just because maybe as a Christian at any point in life you can't see Him? When you walk out at night time into the darkness of the street, is the sun not still in the sky? Is it still? We don't see it shining. We can't see it. We only, at best, maybe in the city sometimes and in the cloudy skies of Scotland, we don't often see even the reflection in the moon. But often it's just darkness up there. But does it mean the sun is no longer shining? Sorry. I put on a tie. I've no idea how to stop this. I've tapped to stop. I put on a timer for the two minute silence but it went on to an hour instead of a minute. So that's it finishing there. So that's a hint from the divine, existent

[26 : 10] God who has used my phone to say, stop talking. You've gone on too long. Things aren't as they seem, are they? You know, things are never as they seem. And the question for us, they often in the darkness is, are you still going to trust Him? Does He become an oppressive and violent God because you can't see His goodness? Where will you trust Him? And that will often be the biggest test of faith because I want to just finish by going on to this revelation, this further revelation of the name of God I am. In John chapter 8, if you look that up quickly with me as we come to a conclusion, John chapter 8 and verse 58, Jesus is speaking and He's making a claim about Himself and He's speaking to the religious leaders of the day who really question Him and who don't like Him and don't like what He's saying. They say to Him, you're not yet 50 years old, the Jews say to Him, yet you have seen Abraham. And Jesus says, I tell you the truth, Jesus answered, before Abraham was born, I am. Okay, before Abraham was born, I am. Now that's not a grammatical mistake either by Jesus or by the commentator or by the writer to the gospels. This is Jesus taking clearly, powerfully and unambiguously the divine name for Himself. Before Abraham was born, I am. And He's claiming that name. And we know from that moment on, the leaders wanted Him dead because He claimed divinity. He was claiming to be divine. And in John 1 we're told in the beginning was the word, the word became flesh. So this Jesus Christ became a human being, but He pre-existed because He is God. And so you've got this existing

God, this being God, this eternal God, this God who just simply exists. And everything we can predicate of that God, we can predicate of Jesus. Jesus is this revelation of who God is in His life, in His teaching, amazingly, in His crucifixion. You talk about suffering, you talk about darkness, you talk about isolation and loneliness in your life. You blame God that He's not interested. You think God is far and distant. And He is God, the existing one, the I am. And He's a crucified God. He's a God who's crying, you're forsaking me of the Father. He's a God who is resurrected. He's a God who's outworking His salvation love through what He has done, dying in our place, taking our sins upon Himself so that He can be with us and we can be with Him. And in the temporary remaining darkness that we often go through, that we have no answers for and that we hate with passion, we recognize it's temporary because He has promised never to leave us. Not only temporary, He is with us through it. He is bringing it to conclusion. He has a reason behind it and He is going to take us to heaven. It's an existence. It's a living God. It's God who never ceases to exist. When He died, He didn't cease to exist. He gave up His body willingly but He existed in the corridors of hell, taking the full punishment for our sin and being separated from the love of the Father in a way that we can truly never understand. So Jesus Christ claims the name. And we can take the opposite of that, can't we? We can take everything that we see in Jesus, we can see as also God. Not only everything we predicate of God, we can predicate to Jesus but the opposite way of what we see in Jesus, we can see as God as well. You know, what does God look like? I mean in His character and His being. Well

Jesus defines it. Jesus reveals what the I am, Existent God is. You know, who do you think God is? What is your God like? You know, very often we, I think we transpose our experiences either of an earthly father or of an earthly experience or of a human being, power or might or all kinds of different things. We put that on to God and we think because this is happening in my life, this must

be the kind of God He is, good or bad. And yet He, this I am God is the God who reveals Himself in Jesus and who takes His own I am statements. You know, I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the door. I am the good shepherd.

I am the resurrection in the life. I am the way, the truth in life. I am the true vine. Revealing the kind of loving. You look at the love, you look at the life of Jesus, the life of the I am and see how people responded to Him and see who, who was attracted to Him.

The children would sit in His knee, the poor and the oppressed and the downtrodden and the rejected loved this saviour. He was compassionate and patient with His own who were slow to believe but the self-righteous, those who didn't think they needed a doctor spiritually, He exposed their self-righteousness. Jesus is the Lord of glory, the Shekinah glory of God. James, his brother, his earthly brother and James 2.1 speaks of him, Jesus is the Lord of glory. Can you imagine that? Your brother speaking of you in that way unless he did a divine revelation, understood who Jesus was. One who is to be worshiped, one who is to be obeyed and one in whom we are to have great gratitude as we come to Him for salvation in our lives. So Jesus Christ is the revelation of this I am God and we don't make our judgment on the character of God based on our own personal experiences of life outside of His own revelation. We must see and understand Him as He reveals [32 : 50] Himself as the One who always is. He is the greatest fact. The universe has a moral, rational, personal being at its core. I think that is quite significant isn't it? That your existence, your life is not purposeless and isn't without meaning but your as a created being, you are responsible to come to terms with the living God and what He says about us. Again I say particularly, especially in the darkness, it is very easy for us as subjective people to believe in Him when things are going well isn't it? Oh yeah, it is great. God is a great God, He loves me and He shows His love and He makes things great for me. But in the darkness which is the Bible is full of that darkness and He went through that darkness not only so that for us it would be temporary but He would be with us through it and He would in fact turn upside down to use it for His glory and for our good. Even in the darkness it is very tough. It is tough for us to say Lord not my will but Yours be done. Isn't that?

Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, was that a doddle for Him? Was that easy? Hey, He was God, it is easy, no problem. Not so. Not my will but Yours be done. Our biggest problem is our hearts, because our hearts want what our hearts want. Our hearts want what our hearts want. That is the core of sin because our hearts are imperfect and they are self centered. And the biggest challenge for us is to recognize this wonderful God, this great existing God who loves us but who is turning our hearts, turning our lives upside down, turning our hearts upside down and forgiving our sins. And maybe we can worship Him as the great God. Please, when you struggle and when I struggle the natural temptation is to run away from God. The next thing is to blame Him and the next thing is to blame His people.

And all of these things will allow us to turn our backs on Him and to walk away from Him. Now very often His people will do blame worthy things but He still asks us to love them.

But He is perfect and He is this existing, ever present God and much though we run, He still loves us and He still exists and He promises to take us through these times if we will come to Him and rely on Him and plead for His help like the Israelites pleaded in their misery and slavery for help.

Our greatest temptation in trouble is not to cry out. Our greatest need is to cry out.

Father God, help us we pray to not shrink you down. How easy it is for us how difficult it is to give you the glory that is yours, how difficult it is for us to see how blinded we often are, how much in the dark we often feel, how clouded is our vision and imperfect our understanding. But we ask for your help. I ask for your help. We ask for your help to see you more clearly that we can worship you more purely through the power and love of Jesus Christ and His redeeming work. We can see our sin and run from it and then we can see your permanence and your permanent goodness and your permanent interest, your permanent communication, your permanent compassion and connection and incarnation not just to be able to reveal yourself but to be our substitute, to die in our place, to take away the blackness and the darkness and the death that we all face but one that in Christ will be a defeated death and a death with its sting removed and a death that will usher us into your nearer presence. Help us to see these things and help us to be mature and strong Christians and help us to not be blown about by every wind of doctrine or by every rough experience or every rotten feeling or just by how we look in the mirror in the morning. But maybe we should be steadfast and help us to be persevering and strong not in our own strength but in the strength you promise and help us to remember your great promises of love and protection and power and permanence

and heaven and guidance in that. We pray for any who may be cynical today or unbelieving or uncommitted. We kind of know God and know about God and know about His love but have a foot in both camps or maybe just holding back. We pray that they would see your greatness today and the wonder of a God who comes and does for them what no one else can do. Greater love is no man than this. That he lay down his life for his friends and maybe that any such today will put their faith and trust in Jesus and their lives will be transformed as a result. So help us God we pray in Jesus name. Amen.