

## Moses - "God Seeks the Runaway"

### *The God Who Seeks*

#### Exodus

01/14/2024

### Introduction

#### Recap of Series Intro.

#### Pray.

**When I was 10 years old, I ran away from home.** Anyone else have one of these moments in their childhood? Let me tell you how it went down for me. I am the youngest of three brothers, all separated by 2 years – so at this time we were 10, 12, and 14.

And as just sort of happens in families, we each played a particular role.

- My oldest brother was the brains – straight A's, 1400 on the SAT as a 7th grader, all of that jazz.
- My middle brother was the brawn – star athlete, set just about every basketball record at our school, you know.
- So me? I was...the religious kid. I know. Shocker.

As the religious kid, I was prone to taking my faith to the extreme. And at this particular point in my life, I had decided to give up all "secular" music. Basically not listen to anything except for explicitly "worship" music.

Which is a totally fine personal conviction to have... But when you're 10, it's not like a nuanced understanding of "this isn't good for me, but I have charity and grace and understanding for the personal convictions of others in gray areas of their lives so let me hold this winsomely."

When you're 10, it's – "I don't listen to non-Christian music and if you do, you're probably going to hell."

And so one day we're driving home from school, and the system my mom worked out is a rotation of who got to choose the music. And that day it was my brother's turn – and he chose...Blink-182. I of course protested from the back seat, getting angrier and angrier as the drive went on that my heathen of a mom refused to stop him.

So by the time we got home, I had had enough. I went up to my room, grabbed my book bag, loaded it up with a few clothes, a box of granola bars, a gatorade, and a flashlight and off I went. Down our ¼ mile driveway and off down the street, to a better, more godly life.

**Here's the only problem** – we lived at least, at least 10 miles from town. And did I mention I was 10? And did I mention, I was a bit bigger as a child. And so I'm huffing and puffing, just loaded with adrenaline and legalism... and next thing I know I look to my left, and there's mom...in the van. Right next to me, slowly just inching along.

I look in and she just smiles and very calmly asks – "You ready to come home yet?"

Keep walking.

I look in again – "How about now?"

Keep walking.

One more time – "Want to head home?"

Eventually after about a mile, I relent, get in the van, go home. And I am grounded for a very very long time.

**As I was thinking about our text this morning, and this teaching, and that ridiculous story from my childhood...I couldn't help but wonder... for how many of us is that a picture of our lives with God?**

Certainly with less granola bars and pre-teen angst... but I wonder how many of us spend our lives...our time and effort and energy running away from God, only to find him steadily and slowly seeking us down and calling us home?

**That's where I want to turn our attention this morning.**

As we continue our series together – “The God Who Seeks” – I want to talk about – **God seeking the runaway.**

### **The Story of Moses**

#### **Exodus 2.**

I want to look together at the life of Moses.

Now, Moses life is really fascinating.

- Moses lived to 120 years old, and his life really is broken up into 3rds – 40 years, 40 years, 40 years.
- And we tend to really focus on the last 40.
  - It gets the vast majority of the attention in the Biblical text.
  - It's what most of us are familiar with (either through Sunday school or a movie or whatnot) – the 10 plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea.

But he has a whole lot of backstory, 80 years, ⅔ of his life kind of backstory, before we get to that point.

*And if we look at the first 80 years of his life, what we'll find is that long before he was the courageous and powerful leader of Israel, Moses was a man on the run from God, hiding in the desert in a town called Mideon.*

**And that's the part of his story I want to learn from and be encouraged by today.**

#### **Exodus 2:1-2**

**1 Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months.**

Pause here, a little bit of backstory so you understand why Moses' mom has to hide Moses once he is born.

At this moment in history the people of God, the Israelites, are living in the land of Egypt.

- They have come there decades earlier because of a famine.
- And at first, the relationship between Egypt and Israel was great. An Israelite named Joseph was 2nd in command to the Egyptian King, or Pharaoh. Things are good.
- But a few generations have passed. Joseph has passed away, and chapter 1 tells us that there's a new Pharaoh who doesn't know about Joseph and this great relationship.
- And he's not too fond of the Israelites because of how many of them there are.
  - He's worried they will team up with Egypt's enemies to take them down. So he wants to do whatever he can to oppress them and hold them down as a nation.

**We see some of his tactics in Exodus 1...**

- First, he makes them slaves and sets up a system of forced labor.

- That doesn't work, so next he tells all of the Israelite midwives, the labor and delivery nurses, that when a Hebrew baby is born, if it is a daughter, they can live. But if it is a son, they must kill them.
  - They fear God, so they don't do it. Pharaoh's like – "What's up?"
  - Their answer is basically like – the women are too strong and they push out the babies before we get there?
- So Pharaoh tries option 3 – now, he turns to the whole nation, both Egyptians and Israelites and he says – if a son is born to the Hebrews – throw him into the Nile, but let the daughters live.

Not a great time to be a Hebrew newborn boy. And it's into this setting, Moses is born. That's why his mom hides him.

### **Exodus 2:3-10 (Running commentary)**

**3** When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. **4** And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. **5** Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. **6** When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." **7** Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" **8** And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother. **9** And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. **10** When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Moses will spend the next 40 years of his life being raised as the adopted grandson of Pharaoh.

- He will get all of the best of the Egyptian teaching and training.
- He will learn the latest ideas in hieroglyphics and mathematics and literature and philosophy.

Stephen, a leader in the early church will say about this time period in Moses' life – **Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds. (Acts 7:22).**

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who lived shortly after the time of Christ, wrote a history of Moses based on Egyptian records. It's a bit inflated, but he writes about:

- Moses during these 40 years was a general for the Egyptian army, most known for a specific battle he won against the Ethiopians.
- He also has this whole section about how beautiful Moses was, so handsome that men and women, Egyptian and Jew would stare at him as he passed by. (again a bit inflated).

But the point is that Moses is doing alright. First 40 years, by every worldly standard, is going well...

**11** One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people.

Now, this is a crossroads moment for Moses. Because for the first 40 years of his life, he's had it made. Access to the best education. He's well known, great military reputation. He's the adopted grandson of Pharaoh – no lack. No needs. He's got it all taken care of.

So he can either ride out that cushy life for the rest of his days...OR...he can choose to identify with the Israelites.

**12** He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

Now, just to be clear – standing up against injustice is a good thing. Wanting to step in when one of his people is being mistreated is a good desire. But...two wrongs don't make a right. He goes about it the wrong way. His murder is not justified.

And he knows he's in the wrong. Because the text says what – “he looked this way and that...” and then he hides him in the sand. He's covering up what he's done.

But...the secret will quickly get out. Keep reading.

### **Exodus 2:13-15**

**13 When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, “Why do you strike your companion?” 14 He answered, “Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid, and thought, “Surely the thing is known.” 15 When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.**

Word spreads quickly around both the Israelites and the Egyptians that Moses is a murderer. 24 hours, word has gotten around. Pharaoh is angry, and wants to have Moses killed.

### **So Moses runs away to Midian.**

- A desert land roughly 200 miles away.
- No car. He's on foot – 200 miles. He is running as far as far can be.

### **Feel the Weight of This Moment for Moses**

**Now, I just want us to pause here for a moment and try our best to imagine what's going on in the heart and mind of Moses.**

Sometimes we have this tendency to read the stories of the Bible as if the people are fictional characters, not real life humans. Moses is not superhuman. He's not got some special emotional capacity.

*Think about what just happened in his life:*

- For the first 40 years he's lived in luxury.
- Adopted grandson of the king of Egypt, one of, if not the wealthiest nation at this time in history.
- He's got military prestige and honor.
- He's set up to, probably not take over the throne, but at least be a high ranking official for the rest of his life.

**And in less than 24 hours Moses goes from a life of power and luxury and comfort and status to being a murderer on the run in the desert.**

Let me just ask you for a moment – **what do you think happens to the soul of a 40 year old man who loses everything?**

Now, most of us are not at 40 yet (if you are, and you're visiting, please stay. We are praying for you and would love to have you.) but most of us, myself included are not there yet. So that doesn't land for us.

**So let me try to try to reframe it for us – Almost every single one of us spend our 20s and 30s struggling to build a life.**

- Some of us go to college where we take on absurd amounts of debt to get a piece of paper that says we can do things.
  - Some of us like torture and so we go back for a 2nd one, and a 3rd one.
- Others of us go to trade school or the military.
- We enter into our careers and we *work ourselves to death to make something of that career.*
  - Way more hours than we should.
  - Overtime – nights, weekends. 2am email threads. You know the drill.
- We try to build a home in a place.
  - We try to make some friends (which always seems way harder than it should post-college)
  - We may get married, or rent an apartment, buy a home.

Everyone's life story looks different in these adult years and yet for 99% of us there's one universal constant – **we work ourselves into the ground to build some sort of life we enjoy.**

And we do so with some vague belief that there's this future point of arrival where we'll think "Ah, I made it. I'm good. I'm good financially. I'm good vocationally. I've got status and relationships that matter, and meaning and value. I matter. I look good too."

**Now, you got that picture in your head?**

**Now imagine, everything you are currently working so incredibly hard for right now, after 2 decades of labor, in 24 hours, \*snap\* it's gone.**

**That's where Moses is at the end of Exodus 2:15. A murderer, on the run, in hiding, 200 miles from his home, in the desert of Midian.**

**And that's where he is going to stay for the next 40 years of his life.**

Because, and we talked about two weeks ago – God, unfortunately for us in our society of speed, and haste, and groceries on demand and same-day Amazon prime...God works so much more slowly and so much more patiently than us.

And so that's where Moses is. For 40 years. He gets married. He has some kids. Those kids probably have some kids. He takes up shepherding...as one does.

### God Seeks Moses

**And then just when you think that's curtain close, end of scene...look what happens...**

#### **Exodus 3:1-10**

**1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 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. 3 And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."**

**4 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." 5 Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 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.**

**7 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, 8 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. 9 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 oppress them. 10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”**

40 years of running. 40 years of hiding. 40 years in a nowhere desert.

And God shows up.

**God seeks the runaway, Moses.**

And He says to him – I have heard the cries of my people. I have seen their affliction. I know their sufferings. Come – I want you. Runaway. Murderer. Coward. I want you to go to Pharaoh and bring my people out of Egypt.

This is what our God does – He seeks, calls, redeems the stories of the runaway.

No Moses – I won't let you live the rest of your life in hiding in Midian. I have a purpose for your life. I'm going to use you in the powerful, global, redemption story for my people. If you'll just stop running and surrender to me – I will redeem the story of your life in a way you cannot imagine.

### **God Seeks the Runaway**

**And this, church, is what God offers to you and to me as well.  
Just like He does Moses, God seeks us in our running.**

He shows up. He gets our attention. And he calls us back to Himself. Call us back home. God seeks and saves. When we are doing everything in our power to get as far away from him as possible, he chases and seeks the runaway.

**Now – question – where does that hit you this morning?**

**I bet for some of us, we feel this in our souls.**

You think back to your life and you see so clearly your running away from God and His constant gracious pursuit of you.

You might even see this reality right now. Being in this room, hearing God's Word sung and read and preached – you sense this as an invitation and you know you've been running. And just being in a worship gathering, maybe for the first time ever or for the first time in a long time is evidence enough – God has sought me down in my running and hiding.

Let me invite you, maybe for the first time ever in your life, to turn and trust in Him. To put your faith in Jesus. To surrender running your life over to God. To confess you are a sinner in need of a Savior, and to believe in Him. You can do that this morning. I'll be over here on the side after the sermon, let's talk about what it means to follow Jesus.

**But for others of us, you might think – I don't know if this applies to me at all. I see how maybe at one point he sought me when I was running, but now I'm not running. I'm here on Sundays. I'm in a Community Group. I'm doing the stuff.**

But running doesn't always look like how we think it does.

**For some of us, running from God looks like a bit more subtle, a bit sneakier.**

- Not **confessing** to him that one sin you just wish would disappear. Keeping to ourselves that one part of our life we know does not glorify him. We don't confess it to him in prayer. We don't confess it to others so we can receive the help we need. **That's running.**
- Avoiding that specific **calling** or **desire** he keeps trying to place on your heart because you're afraid of what it might mean for your future plans. You've decided the trajectory of your life, and your plans don't include overseas missions, don't include leveraging your career and moving somewhere strategic for the sake of the gospel, doesn't include downsizing your house to move into a particular neighborhood to live on mission. It doesn't include these gospel sacrifices...even though you know God is calling you towards it. **That's running.**
- Resisting that **small step of obedience** – the conversation he's been calling you to have. The forgiveness you know you should extend. The friendship you know you're supposed to build. The habit you know you're supposed to take steps to break. **That's running.**
- Every time God tries to speak His love over you, in Christ, through His Word and Spirit you rebuff with a "but what about" or "yeah but..." or "I could do more..." **That's running.**
- Or maybe even thinking – "You know I needed God before. I needed His presence and His power and His Spirit before, but I've got a pretty good handle on my life now. I've got things under control. And now that you're smooth sailing you haven't thought about Him or His presence in your life in quite some time. **That's running.**

***And yet the heart of God in all of that – is to seek you. To pursue you.  
To chase you down and draw you back to Himself.***

- Sometimes in a still small voice in the silence of prayer, in the reading of His Word, in the quiet of the night, in the context of community and God's people.
- Sometimes in our own burning but not burned up bushes. You called it an interruption, and unwanted intrusion on your life through crisis or through your plans getting derailed – what if it's God trying to get your attention to stop running.

God is seeking the runaway. He is seeking you and I.

**Turn to Christ**

***And we know that, not just from the story of Moses even though it is clearly and evidently on display...but we also know that God seeks the runaway because 1,300 years later the true and better Moses would come.***

- Another son would be born on the run from a king who wanted to kill him.
- Another man who would not flee to the desert, but willingly enter the desert to go toe to toe with the temptations of the devil and win.
- ***Another redeemer, the true redeemer, sent to rescue God's people from captivity, to seek and save the lost, and to lead them home.***

We know God seeks the runaway, because even in the story of Moses we get glimpses of the greater redeemer, called out of the desert to lead God's people home.

The story of Moses is a foretaste of the redemption offered to the runaway in the cross of our Savior King Jesus.

The one who says about Himself in **Luke 19 – "For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost."**

We were not looking for God when he sought us out. We were not faithfully waiting for our redeemer. It's in our running and our hiding, our proverbial Midians, that God in Christ seeks and saves us.

And it's even now, in our running, He seeks us still.

**So the question for us is...will we stop running?**

Will we learn the greatest difficulty and yet greatest need of the human soul – ***to be loved by God in Christ Jesus.***

Will we stop running and surrendering to the burning but not burned up bush in our lives?

Will we let ourselves be found?

***Practical – listening prayer.***

**Eugene Peterson.**

- Passed away almost 6 years ago now.
- Most famous – *The Message*.
- Son Lief
  - “My dad fooled the world. Thinking he had new messages in every book and every sermon.”
  - “He preached one message, the same one he said to me every night as a boy.”

**“God loves you. He's coming after you. And He's relentless.”**

**Pray.**