

The Unapproachable God

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Date: 29 January 2023

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[0:00] Exodus chapter 19, keep your Bibles there, and we'll dig into this section of Scripture. Before we start, a question.

How far do you think you would have gotten in life, or how effective would you be if you didn't prepare yourself or didn't have people to help you with the really big events in life? How far, how good, how effective do you think you'd be if you didn't prepare and if you didn't have people helping you prepare for the big events in life? Think of getting a job, your first job interview. Could you just walk in there unprepared and wing it? What would happen? Say, thank you very much. Next. Going into business. Oh, here's a great business contract. It'll be fine. Don't worry about the small print. It's a great opportunity. Put all your money in this business contract. It'll be fine. No thought. No going to someone and saying, hi, how can we help you?

[1:03] Or how can you help me? Just go into it by yourself. No advice. Go for it. Some of us may have done that. Probably not a good idea. Lastly, what about marriage?

Boy meets girl. Boy likes girl. Let's get married. Girl says, fine. Sure. Why not? Does anyone get married like that? Does anyone pitch up onto their marriage day, especially females, the women, without being prepared, without being fully prepared?

Can the guy just waltz in there? No. Oh, it's fine. Well, it's no problem. Whatever you're wearing is fine. Very low key. Everything's fine. Now, what would happen?

We'd probably make a mess of the whole thing. The job, if you're not fully prepared, if you're not trained. Business, definitely make a mess of that. And marriage, definitely make a mess if you're not fully prepared.

It's hard enough even being fully prepared. In our passage today, God has a really big task for His people. And they need to know just who it is that they're serving.

[2:14] And they've got to be prepared for that. And they've got to have someone help them to be prepared for that service. Are you with me? In our passage today, God is finally going to meet His people in this great climactic event.

This is the highlight of the whole Old Testament story up to this point. The meeting of God with His people on Mount Sinai. And they need to be prepared.

And they need someone to stand in the gap for them. And they can't just waltz up to God and say, hi, how are you doing? Put it another way. If we, St. Mark's Church, we as Christians want to be or going to be effective for His kingdom, if we're going to be priests, remember we looked at that last week?

God calls the Israelites early on in chapter 19, you're going to be a kingdom of priests for me.

You've got a job to do on planet Earth. You're my agents on planet Earth. It's a huge task.

It's an awesome task. But it's not a small task. You don't just go waltzing into that. We as Christians have that continued task ahead of us. If we're going to be effective as God's people on Earth, as His priests, as His agents that bring His kingdom on Earth, there are three indispensable truths from this passage that we need to grab hold of.

[3:44] I'll say them for us so that you know where we're going. The first is we've got to grab hold of the unapproachable glory of God, which is kind of counterintuitive.

God isn't approachable, but we somehow need to grab hold of that truth. Then we've got to look at the importance of consecration, of being holy if we're going to be effective for God.

And then the absolute need of a mediator to help us relate to God and do what He says. So those three things we're going to try and work through today.

So first, the unapproachable glory of God. As I said, this is the big moment in the story that the whole Bible has been moving towards up until this point.

God is going to meet His people, and He does so in the most incredible, awe-inspiring way possible. God puts on this amazing show of awe and power.

[4 : 51] Do you remember, for those who remember back to the 90s, there was a war in Iraq. The United States went to war, and they had their Operation Desert Storm, and they talked about shock and awe.

They just moved in with their tanks and their airplanes and their bombs, and they just completely overwhelmed their Iraqi forces. Shock and awe. This is God doing His version of shock and awe. There's smoke. There's fire. There's thunder. There's lightning. There's earthquakes. An entire mountain goes up in flames. And these trumpets blaring out as the Creator God of the universe descends to planet Earth to meet with His people.

Have a look at from verse 16 in that chapter. On the morning of the third day, there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud.

On the mountain. And a very loud trumpet blast. You know, like in the movies, when you go and watch at the IMAX and those speakers are...

[6 : 07] I need a bass. Can we get some bass? Okay. Okay. Not a...

A very loud trumpet blast. I'm trying to give you that feel. Just tell me if it's too loud. Can I...

Is it fine? I can go louder. All right. All right. Is it... Turn down. A very loud trumpet blast so that all the people in the camp trembled.

Okay. Okay. I've made a little bit of noise. But if there was a huge concussion of thunder. Bam! And in fact, just that noise, your adrenaline levels shoot up.

Boom! You can't help it. Loud noise. You know, you always get a fright. That's what... Loud. And it's a blast. You can feel. Oh, I went to a rock concert once. Bon Jovi.

[7 : 10] Oh. It was so cool. And they do the sound test. Boom! And this bass. You can actually see the people. Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! As the sound just travels through the whole crowd. Bam! And then God is doing this for an entire mountain.

Just by the way, Mount Sinai is... It's as big as the Table Mountain chain. Okay. We're not talking Devil's Peak or Lion's Head here. We're talking from Cape... From the city of Cape Town down to... Probably down to Constantia. Okay. Three times. Two times as high. A huge rock of mountain. And this whole thing is reverberating. Well, the people are trembling.

Verse 17. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. And they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. So God is like, come boys. I'm going to meet you. Moses! They're like... I think they're backing off at this point. And Moses is like... Come guys. You see that thing over there happening on the mountain? We need to go there. And that's why it says they took their stand.

[8 : 07] Anyway. There's almost... There's an indication in the Hebrew that God was saying, hey, listen, come up here. And they're like, no, no. We'll just stay down here for a little while. Just until, you know, the lightning and the thunder subsides.

But God isn't finished. Verse 18. That's just the start. That's the preview. Now, Mansana was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire.

Can you imagine? Just this huge column of fire engulfing this entire mountain. You're standing there. And God says, yes, come up here.

Now you know why you need a mediator. The smoke. So God is standing there. Mansana was wrapped in smoke. The Lord...

He comes down in fire. And the smoke goes up. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln. And the whole mountain trembled greatly. And the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder.

[9 : 11] And at its loudest point, Moses speaks. Lord! We don't know what he said. Maybe he went...

And out of this thunder and fire and smoke, God answers Moses.

Now, if you're standing there, what is the first thing you think of Moses? Okay, firstly, thank you that he is there, not me. And secondly, who? The God of the universe is speaking to this little human. This human speaks to God. He's not dead. And God... Is speaking back. What immediately does that tell you about that guy?

You better listen to him. Because you can't do that in the... But this guy can. What is the point of the show of power?

[10:10] It's a total intimidation tactic. God wants his people to know exactly who is boss. Exactly who he is.

Now, he doesn't actually do that. This is God hiding himself. This is God going... That's a thunder. That's God's trumpet.

Boop! I'll just do it quietly. All the angels are standing there. Lord, show them who you are. Here. Boop! Boop! Because if he showed them who he really is... In his essence, in his power, in his infinite ability...

What would happen? To the mountain, to the people, to the planet... And to the entire cosmos.

Boop! It would disappear in a puff of smoke. If God really showed who he is...

He's got to accommodate himself. Even in this amazing epiphany... This amazing thing that's going on here... God is still... In Calvin's words... Whispering to us... Like a child...

[11:09] Like a mom does to its child. A... Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep. So that we can hear him. It's like in the movies.

When the superhero... He's hiding his power the whole time... And the time comes when he's got to show exactly who he is. Flame on. Bam! And everyone can see... Yo, this guy's amazing.

That's what God is doing here. What's the correct response to that? Well, the Jews had the correct response. They trembled with fear. You actually can't do anything else...

If that amount of power... Is made visible in front of you. You're just going to be scared. And that is the correct response. Even the people are trembling with fear. Even the mountains are afraid.

What are we to make of this? Why is God doing this? As I said...

[12:05] They've got to know who he is. Because there's big things that they've got to do for him. This kingdom of priests. They're going into the promised land. But there's giants there. There's big problems for them there.

They've got to know that their God is bigger and more powerful. They've got to be more scared of him... Than scared of the problems they're going to face in their life. They've got to know that what... And God is... He's hiding himself. His power. And they know this. And they know that if he really shows off... When he really gets going... This is God coming down and saying hi. This is God's handshake.

Okay. This is God in a friendly mood. Just wait till he gets angry at your enemies. Boom. Then... Now we're talking. Okay.

First point. Don't trifle... In your relationship... With the God of the universe. Don't minimize it. Don't make it small. Don't make him...

[13:04] Don't bring him down. Let him be big... And powerful... And strong... And scary. Don't play around with God in your life.

He is a God. God. You are a mere human. God's are dangerous...

When they come into contact... With the world of man. This is life and death stuff. You don't meet this kind of God... This kind of power. You don't come to this kind of realization...

Of the being that we worship... Who made us... And then go away unchanged. Everything in life... Will change after this meeting... For these people.

Or... Does it? We'll have to see... What they do... After they meet this God. Nonetheless...

[14:04] I saw this... Meme... On Facebook. Thought it was cool. Kind of... Sums up... What's going on here. Our son...

Will burn your eyes out... From 92 million miles away. And you expect to... Casually stroll... Into the presence of its creator. Are... You... Insane? Just go outside just now...

And look at the son for five minutes. You... You won't be the same after that. Don't mess around with God. We're meant to take God seriously... In our lives. We're not meant to give him...

The leftovers... When we feel like it. But... This kind of God... Deserves the highest level... Of our respect... And honor...

And service. This is why God needs to be... The number one priority in our life. Because he deserves it. And...

[14:59] Because he is this kind of God... God's people need to prepare... Adequately... To meet him. And the only thing that they can do... The only thing that will...

Be adequate enough to meet this God... Is total... Consecration... Of everything... That is going to come near to this God. So have a look... So our next point...

Is the importance of being consecrated. The importance of being holy. So... The people have to be consecrated. Have a look at verse 10. The Lord says to Moses...

Go to the people... And consecrate them... Today and tomorrow. Make them wash their clothes... And be ready... On the third day. Okay... Very important thing... To wash their clothes. But imagine...

I mean... How long they've been in the desert? Got any water? They didn't have water before... Whatever water you've got... Make sure your clothes are clean. Wash yourself... In fact... Wash yourself for three days.

[15:54] Be prepared in three days... You're going to meet me in three days. Be clean. Don't come to me... To Somosoma. The people have to be consecrated. Their clothes have to be consecrated.

Verse 14... Again... After Moses had gone down the mountain... To the people... He consecrated them... And they washed their clothes. The priests...

Verse 22... Have to be consecrated. Now they're normally... You know... More holy than the others... How we like to think of them. Verse 22... Even the priests... Who approach the Lord... Must consecrate themselves... Or the Lord... Will break out... Against them. How's that? You're my priest... Be careful of coming near me... Because I can break out... And when God... I mean... The fire that's up there... Is going to spread down here... And then we'll see... Who's left standing. And lastly... The mountain itself... Has to be consecrated.

[16:48] Verse 23... Moses said to the Lord... The people cannot come up... The Mount Sinai... Because you yourself warned us... Put limits around the mountain... And set it apart...

As holy. Imagine that was your job. You have to go around... The whole mountain... And wash it. In three days...

Listen... You better come back here... In three days... Yeah... They get going... Okay... But they put a boundary on it... So you know... Don't go over that boundary marker... Because if you do... Well... What do you think... Is going to happen... If they... If anyone in that camp... Decides to himself... Ah... Yeah... Yeah... That's fine... How carefully... Do you think...

They would have prepared themselves... Or made themselves holy... Just a little bit of a... You know... When you get to work... And you're late... Shake out your clothes... Put it on... Off you go... You are... I will get the best clean...

[17:42] In that camp... And make sure... My clothes are spotless... Go up to the mountain... What would happen... If they cross that boundary line... We'll see...

Three days of preparation... No sexual relations... So everything... God is...

Everything that's going to come... Into contact with this God... Has to be holy... Or made holy... So consecrated here... It's the Hebrew word... Kadosh... It's the Hebrew word for holy...

So everything in the temple... The cups... The thing... Later on... Anything that's... In the priest... In the temple worship... Is going to be made holy... The priests are made holy... It's to set something aside...

It's to separate something... It's to dedicate for special use... Or it becomes special to God... We think of holiness... As a difficult thing... But think of it here...

[18:36] As more fitful purpose... That will get closer to what... God is trying to achieve... With his people... So holiness really... It is being separate... It is being set apart... But it's...

So that you're fit for purpose... Does that... Does that make sense? Not just for being clean... You're going to do something... What does God want you to do? He wants you to be a priest... So you become holy... So you can be a good priest...

So you can be effective... So you can be... Fitful purpose... It's like a recruit... Joining the army... You know when... When... An 18 year old... Joins the army...

You know the first thing they do... They've got to drill them... They've got to get fit... They've got to do push-ups... They can't just go into the front line... And start fighting... I'll die... They've got to become... They...

Go into the army... You're separate... You set aside for a specific purpose... But you're trained for it... You become... What you need to be... You go through basics...

[19:28] You learn how to handle a gun safely... To learn to work as part of a bigger unit... So that you can become more effective... And that's what's happening here... God wants His people to

carry out His mission on earth...

To rid the land of evil... And to bring goodness and blessing back into the world... To undo the consequences of the fallen sin... But to do that effectively...

They've got to be different... To the way the world normally works... Think about yourself now... Are you fit...

For purpose... To work for God... In His kingdom... I don't feel very fit for purpose...

I'm not fit for purpose very often... How do you get holy? How do you become the person that God wants you to be? So that you can work for His kingdom...

[20 : 23] And change the world... And challenge evil... And shape the relationships around you... By showing them the love of God... How does God make us ready to become His priests?

Well, the New Testament is clear... There's only one... Person... That can present you... Acceptable...

To God... It's not you... It's not your grandparents... It's not Moses... He's dead... It's not any other human being that has ever lived... Except one... Jesus...

Christ... Who can do that for you... How does He do that? Well... That brings us to the final point...

When we meet this kind of God... And we want to be effective for His kingdom... We haven't...

There's an... There's an... There's an absolute need for a mediator... Someone who can present you to this God...

[21 : 23] And make you what He needs you to be... So that you don't die when you meet Him... You can try by yourself... Or you can say...

I don't want that... In either case... You're going to end up... Dead... Being... Totally ineffective in this life... You might think you're effective... Everything dies with you...

If you're not a Christian... Everything... Nothing survives... Except if you're a Christian... Then... Things... Continue... Okay...

So the absolute need for a mediator... What's interesting... In our account... Is God is like... Hey guys... We want to meet together... And the one thing He doesn't do... Is meet with His people... God is up on the mountain... The people are down at the bottom... And they don't want to come close... In fact... God has told them... Don't come close... Because if you come close... You're going to die... There's one person...

[22 : 18] Who's running up and down the mountain... Like a crazy person... And that's Moses... So in the text... Moses... Come up here... Whoop... Alright... Now go down and tell them... Whoop... Alright... What do the people say... Whoop... Come up here... Tell me what the people say... Okay... Go down...

Whoop... Tell them not to do this... Okay... I told them not to do that... Alright... Well... Tell them not again... Okay... So Moses is going up and down... So... God is on top...

Heaven has come down to earth... But the people aren't ready... For that sort of sacred space...

There's one person... That can enter that space... Where God and the world meet... And that's at this point... Moses...

The whole exercise... Is to show... Is so that the people... Will know that Moses is special... And they need to listen...

To him... Okay... Have a look at verse... I'll find it for you now... Oh... The first verse...

[23 : 19] The first verse we read... Verse 9... The Lord said to Moses... I'm going to come to you... In a dense cloud...

That's a... Yeah... Okay... Never mind... See... I'm going to come to you... In a dense cloud... So that the people will hear me... Speaking with you... And they... It's missing in the MNV...

Will always put their trust in you... Is that... You see why Moses... What God is doing with Moses...

The whole exercise... Is Moses come here... I'll talk to you... You go speak to the people...

And you as the people... I need to listen to this guy... This guy that's the messenger... Between heaven and earth... Because you can't do it and live... And anyway... You don't want to do it...

Because it's too scary... That makes Moses...

The most important person... In the life of those people... Would you agree? If you're standing... At the bottom of the mountain... And... Why? Let's... Let's... Let's make it real here...

[24 : 21] The God of the universe... Pitches up on our... Rooftop... Fire... Glory... Fire... Earthquake... And he says... Listen... We all...

We all... We all... We all are going to die... And he says... Nolan... Just come up here... Everyone just looks at Nolan... Woo! And Nolan comes back...

Five minutes later... He's like... Guys... I need to tell you something... About God... We... We... We... What are you going to listen to? It's like that time...

When they call... At school... Well... Mr. Murray... Come to the church... To the school office... You know... When the headmaster calls... Woo! But you come back... And you've won an award... Woo! They're going to listen...

Because he's the only one... Allowed to go up... Into that maelstrom... Of fire and flame... And can come back down... Unharmed... Makes him the most important... Person in their life...

[25 : 18] And his words become important... And Moses was... To tell the people... How to approach God... What they could... And couldn't do... How far they could go... Because if they went...

Beyond what God... Had told them to do... What was waiting for them... Is instant... Ash... Heepification... Ash... Gone...

If you walk across... That boundary line... Would you agree with me? Normally that's what... Fire does to people... Alright... So... Moses is their mediator... Ours is Christ...

And so... I don't know about you... But this speaks... The absolute imperative... Of having Christ... As your mediator... As someone in your life...

That intercedes between you and God... Only he's been taken... He's the only one... That's been in heaven... Come out of heaven... Been with us... And gone back to heaven...

[26 : 14] And remains unscathed... He's the only one... That can take us... To meet God... Unscathed... How does he do this? It's because of his...

Nature... Of who he is... And the main thing... Is of what he's done... On the cross... As our priest... So Hebrews chapter 4...

You might want to turn there... But I should have it up... On the screen for us... Therefore since... We have a great high priest... Who has ascended... Into heaven... Into this...

Place of... Fire... Don't think of heaven... And rainbows... And pink clouds... And full of little angels... It's not like that... Daniel chapter 7...

Ezekiel chapter 1... Revelation chapter 4 and 5... It's scary up there... Jesus... The son of God... Since we've got him...

[27 : 10] Let us... Let us... Hold firmly to the faith... We profess... This trust in him... For we do not have a high priest... Who is unable to empathize... With our weaknesses... But wonder of wonders...

We have one... Who has been tempted... In every way... Just as we are... And yet he didn't sin... So therefore... Because you've got Christ...

As your mediator... As your priest... As one who's sacrificed... His blood for you... We can approach... God's throne... That scary place...

Where people die... If they're not invited... And if God doesn't know... Who they are... And you can't anyway get there... Unless they're invited... Let us then approach...

God's throne of grace... With confidence... With confidence... So that we may receive... Mercy and find grace... To help us... In our time of need...

[28 : 01] Isn't that... Doesn't that make Jesus... The most important person... In your life... He does to me... In fact...

He's the most important person... In world history... He's the only person... Still alive... That can represent us... To the living God... And keep us alive... Long enough to survive the meeting... For us to think about...

Do you treat Jesus... With the respect he deserves... As the one sent from God... To represent you... Do you listen... To him... As you should...

Do you respect his uniqueness... As the only mediator... That can do anything... On our behalf... Or do you share him around... With the other saviors in your life... Being busy...

Drugs of choice... Anything you can choose... That you think is going to help you... Get on in life... This highlights the vital importance...

[29 : 07] Of listening to Jesus... And one of our biggest problems... And the thing that causes us... The most problems in our life... Is we don't listen to him enough... That's probably the biggest thing... That causes problems in your life...

Is not listening to Jesus... In learning how to both act... And react to the stuff that happens... On a daily basis... There's so many voices... Speaking to us louder than Jesus... In our lives... The TV... Electronic media... Our work... Our busyness... Our past... Our fear of the future... Our work... Or play time... Our work... Our work... Our work... We've got to spend time... Listening to Jesus... Because his voice... Is the one that changes us... To be the people... That is acceptable to God... His life... [30 : 00] Consequence us... To make... Our lives... Able to do stuff for God... And gives us... Worth and meaning... Without that... You're flapping around... Doing nothing... Making a lot of noise... Until you die... Hurting a lot of people... In the way... But... There's one last thing... That makes Jesus... Different to Moses... Not one last thing... But one thing I want us to look at... Before we close... And this thing also makes him... Totally unique... You see... Moses could represent... The people to God... But he didn't bridge that gap... There's this... There's this gap... There's this fire... Between God... And the people of the Old Testament... Moses could run up and down... But the people didn't go up... Moses couldn't take them... Into God's presence... But Jesus can... His death and his blood... Breaks down the great divide... Between God and his people... [30 : 57] So... Let's end up in Hebrews chapter 12... Hebrews chapter 12... From verse 18... You haven't come to a mountain... That can be touched... That is burning... With fire... To darkness and gloom and storms... All that stuff... The trumpet blast... That when it spoke... The people said... No, we can't listen... We're too scared... Even Moses was trembling with fear... So... Who have we come to? What have we come to? Are we further away... Or are we closer? Verse 22... But because of Christ... You... Christian... Have come to Mount Zion... Not Mount Sinai... Mount Zion stands for the cross... For what Jesus did... At Jerusalem... To the heavenly Jerusalem... To the city... Of the living God... You have come to... Thousands upon thousands of angels... [32 : 06] In joyful assembly... That word was used... In the Olympics... When someone won... Yes... When your guy won... Yeah... When they look down at us... Yeah... Boys... Come on... To the church of the firstborn... Woo... That's us... From the dead... Whose names are written... In heaven... You've come to God... The judge of all men... To the spirits of righteous men... Made perfect... And to Jesus... The mediator of a new... Covenant... And sprinkled... And to the sprinkled blood... That speaks a better word... Than the blood of Abel... Abel's blood cries out... For justice... Jesus' blood... Gives... Us justice... With God... Peace with God... What a huge difference... Between these two mountains... Sinai... Communicates all... [33 : 04] And a distance between God... And his people... Sinai is a place of... Impersonal terror... But Zion... Where Jesus is... And where his people are... Is totally different... It's a mountain... Of joyful celebration... Of community... Of other people... And relational closeness... With God... So friends... In closing... We need to get these three principles... Operating in our life... If we're going to achieve anything for God... And be effective in building his kingdom... We need to have this big... Big... Picture... Almost terrifying... Vision... Of the God of the universe... So we can know... That there's nothing more powerful... Than the God we serve... We need to be fully consecrated... And holy to his cause... Fit for purpose... And to realize... Our absolute need... For Jesus... Our mediator... But he's a mediator... That doesn't keep us... [33 : 57] At a distance... But he... Takes us with him... Seats us on the throne... With God... And we can call God... Our father... And he can call us... His son... And we'll be able to... Trust him... And live joyfully here... And make a difference... Shall we pray? Heavenly Father... Thank you for a... For these texts of scripture... That remind us of your power... And your glory... But also Lord... That humbles us to the floor...

And how important it is... To have someone like Jesus... In our life... Lord help us to trust him... And make him first priority... In everything that we do... So that we... Can be holy... And come near to you...
Enjoy your presence... And be effective... For your kingdom... In Jesus name... Amen... And be...π■...