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Exodus 5&6

Returning, Returning, Returning to the Lord

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**So, we are in the book of Exodus.** I have multiple friends here at Northstar who teach in Pamplin School of Business and I can't help but think there are some Pamplin students here today as well, so I'm excited to say this morning's passage is for you. If you pay attention you might just see themes will warm your business school heart.

There will be organizational behavior, leadership science, and operational management. There will be human resources, labor relations, and supply chain management. There will even be... accounting.

A lot of you are saying, "I'm all in – you had me at accounting."

**With that scintillating intro** that has your interest piqued, we need to start looking at Exodus.

Last week Matt took us through Exodus 3 and Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush. Matt gave us the challenge of remind, refocus, relinquish:

- Remind – that we are called to love relationship with God
- Refocus – on his sufficiency instead of on ourselves & inabilities
- Relinquish - we need to let go and trust God instead of trying to hold on to what we have or what we want

All of these came from Moses' objections, and each of Moses' objections provide a mirror for us to see these needs in our own lives.

**Out of obedience to God** in that Exodus 3 encounter, Moses has a couple appointments to keep. Exodus 3:18-20... God is speaking...

<sup>18</sup> "The elders of Israel will listen to you. (That is appointment #1) Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt (That is appointment #2) and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.' <sup>19</sup> But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. <sup>20</sup> So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.

**We don't have** a ton of details about that first appointment, but what we do have at the end of Ex. 4 is pretty beautiful – verses 29-31 of chapter 4...

<sup>29</sup> Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, <sup>30</sup> and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, <sup>31</sup> and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

**Aaron speaks to elders,** Moses (or maybe Aaron) shows him the 3 signs God gave Moses

- Staff turning into a snake
- Hand stuck inside cloak becomes leprous, then clean again
- Water from the Nile poured on the ground and turning to blood

**And then the great moments of beauty** – it says the elders of the Israelites believed, they were moved by the Lord’s concern for them, and then they bowed down and worshipped.

Moses and Aaron were probably like, “This is gonna be great – appointment 1 was easy and sweet. Let’s go to our next appointment for more of the same!” High five! (But based on everything Moses believed about his speech and demeanor, it was probably a very awkward high five.)

**Moses next appointment is in Pharaoh.** Moses has been gone a long period of time. The Pharaoh he knew has died and there is a new Pharaoh. We don’t know for sure which Pharaoh was on the throne at the time Moses returned, but many scholars believe it was Amenhotep II, who was 18 years old when he became Pharaoh. Chapter 5:1-2

**5** Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.’”

<sup>2</sup> Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.”

**Look at the boldness and courage** from Moses and Aaron

- We don’t know how they got this audience with him, maybe past standing in the court? Maybe miraculous when Jesus sent disciples for a donkey with only a simple “the Master needs it”?
- This is what the God of Israel says – thus saith the Lord – see this later a lot in the prophets, but rare in the Pentateuch
- No asking – let my people go

**Pharaoh responds** with ignorance and defiance (unpack both in both phrases – “Look at this...”)

“There is always something rebellious about unbelief” – Phillip Ryken

There is a sense of “I can seek to understand & be curious, to give faith a try – but I know better”

This mentality is echoed Rom 1:18-21 (Not just at first moment of belief, but we often choose here...)

**18** The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, **19** since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. **20** For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. **21** For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

**Now let's pause to try to understand** the position of Pharaoh:

He was viewed as a superhuman leader infused with deity. He was a god-king in the eyes of the people. But even Pharaoh, being told again and again that he was god, had to know – had to have some curiosity that there was something more – something more than himself. These verses of Romans 1 are true even for him...

**Continuing with Moses and Aaron's meeting** with Pharaoh – verses 5:3-5

<sup>3</sup> Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword."

<sup>4</sup> But the king of Egypt said, "Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!" <sup>5</sup> Then Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working."

"...**he may strike**..." This is new – we had not seen this in the conversation with God at the burning bush, but it hints to Pharaoh that this God is Almighty God and also gives a hint of what is to come because of Pharaoh's stubbornness.

Also it does not explicitly say that the elders came with Moses & A, as God had commanded

Maybe they lost their nerve, or maybe verse 4 refers to them (to Pharaoh they weren't elders, they were just laborers.) But also could refer to the requested future...

**So that is it for the meeting with Pharaoh.** He has dropped his mic. There is no further discussion – and there are definitely no high fives for Moses and Aaron

In verses 6-9, Pharaoh moves on to his next business meeting.

<sup>6</sup> That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: <sup>7</sup> "You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. <sup>8</sup> But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' <sup>9</sup> Make the work harder for the people so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies."

Overseers/foremen – word meaning not as much about supervision but has a "counting" root meaning so more about inventory/production.

What are you thinking Pharaoh?

This is bad labor policy (increasing misery of your workers) and bad production methods (Quality suffers) But that is what he chose. Maybe he was just extra-reactionary, or maybe this was a plan to drive a wedge between Moses and the people.

**And if the plan was to drive a wedge**, it appeared to hit its mark – 5:19-21

<sup>19</sup> The Israelite overseers realized they were in trouble when they were told, “You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day.” <sup>20</sup> When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, <sup>21</sup> and they said, “May the LORD look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

They are fearful of the trouble coming their way, pronouncing a hope for judgement on Moses & Aaron. The mission is beginning to feel like a colossal failure.

**With that painful complaint received**, it appears Moses goes to God with complaints of his own

<sup>22</sup> Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me? <sup>23</sup> Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.”

One commentator (Mackay) helped me better pause to understand this passage by asking of Moses’ words here – “Is this complaint or is it bewilderment?”

You can read Moses’ words with a super-accusatory tone or with a sense of frustrated confusion.

I don’t know which is best, but I do know verse 22 begins with, “Moses returned to the Lord...” May this always be our posture, whether joyful celebration or great concern and confusion – that we return...

I am a campus minister and I have been dreaming of a “back to normal” fall, so when VT announced this week about masks indoors, I was deflated. When news like that comes, I can scream, I can ball up in the fetal position, whatever – but the best route is one where it can be said, “And Darrell returned to the Lord.” I mess up on that one a lot, but that is where I need to be, where we need to be...

And \_\_\_\_\_ returned to the Lord. And \_\_\_\_\_ returned to the Lord. May that be consistently true

**As chapter 6 unfolds**, God begins to lift some of the clouds for Moses -

**6** Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.”

<sup>2</sup> God also said to Moses, “I am the LORD. <sup>3</sup> I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself fully known to them. <sup>4</sup> I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they resided as foreigners. <sup>5</sup> Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.

**A couple things** to note here:

- “what I will do” – hint of impending plagues – this is coming next week in chapter 7
- “my” mighty hand – it is interesting that “my is not there in the Hebrew – it is more a sense of “a mighty hand”, so some argue the hand is Pharaoh’s. Either way, the power is God’s...

Verses 2-5 are simply God reminding Moses of the realities God has set up for his people

**More encouragement** comes in verses 6-8

<sup>6</sup>“Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup>I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup>And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.’”

**Though he asked it with disdain**, Pharaoh asked a great question, “Who is the Lord?” As we close, let’s ask that again, but first let’s ask that about the people in our passage

**First, Who are the Israelites?**

What do the Israelites think about themselves?	What does Moses think about the Israelites?	What does Pharaoh think about the Israelites?	What does God think about the Israelites?
Without hope Being crushed, abandoned	They are worth his concern and God’s concern – Moses often mirrors God’s compassion 4 them	A commodity; cheapest possible labor – that is all	Worthy of his ear “my people” (3:7) He longs to be their deliverer

**And Who is Moses?**

What do the Israelites think about Moses?	What does Moses think about Moses?	What does Pharaoh think about Moses?	What does God think about Moses?
Bringer of hope, then troublemaker	Incapable of influencing, speaking, or leading	Annoyance, maybe a liar	With God’s leading, Moses is enough and has enough

**And next, Who is Pharaoh?**

What do the Israelites think about Pharaoh?	What does Moses think about Pharaoh?	What does Pharaoh think about Pharaoh?	What does God think about Pharaoh?
Inescapable	Oppressor of God's people	The god-king who has absolute power	Only will be moved by a mighty hand (Ex 3:19) "In the LORD's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him." (Prov 21:1)

**And lastly – How are you allowing God to show you who is in your world?**

<b>What do you think about you?</b> What does God think about you?	<b>What do those who have a chance to lead you think of you?</b> What does God think about those who have a chance to lead you?	<b>What do those who oppose you think about you?</b> What does God think about those who oppose you?	<b>What does God think about you?</b> What does God think about Himself?

Close with greatest needed reminder – what does God think about God? – by reading/reviewing key phrases of what God reveals about Himself in Exodus 6:1-8