

LENT 2024

JOURNEY to FREEDOM

TUESDAY 27TH FEBRUARY

READ: Exodus 7:14-25

'Thus says the Lord, 'By this you shall know that I am the Lord.' See, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall be turned to blood.'

Exodus 7:17

The other week, I was swimming when the lifeguard reached behind him and lifted down the pool strainer. He repeatedly used it to fish out something and then discard it from the pool. I don't know what he removed (and I don't want to) but nothing has made me want to get out of the water more than that!

In our reading today we have something worse. The River Nile is turned to blood and you couldn't just sieve a bit of it out, it was everywhere. In fact, blood was throughout the whole land of Egypt. The fish couldn't get out of the Nile and they died. The Egyptians worshipped the Nile for the life and vitality it brought, but in one move God turns it into a source of death.

All this came about as judgement from God. Just as the Egyptians had thrown the Hebrew baby boys into the Nile (Exodus 1), so in retribution, the Nile becomes a source of death for the Egyptians. Pharaoh wouldn't acknowledge God, nor let His people go (7:14) and so the plagues force him to have to do business with the real God. Whenever we see judgement in the Bible, we also see salvation. It is as Pharaoh and his gods are judged that the Israelites are saved and brought to live with the LORD.

Easter is a wonderful celebration of salvation through judgment. On the cross Jesus faced the just retribution that we deserve for how we have treated God and how we have treated people made in His image. He was judged so that we might be saved. It is as His blood was poured out, that eternal life spreads to all who trust in Him. The old hymn puts it like this:

*There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.*

Today what gods will we go to for rescue? We can go to the Nile, a picture of wealth and prosperity, or to Pharaoh a picture of power and status. Or we can go to Jesus crucified in weakness to rescue those who humbly admit they need to be washed clean.

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