

The Great Reversal – Part 8

The God who Hears by Pastor Rick – 5/30/21

OPENING: Share a high and a low from your week.

Discussion Questions:

1. What stands out to you from the message?
2. Think about experiences that have been pivotal in shaping you. Share one of them with your group. Overall across your group, what type of experiences were they?
3. God is looking for a people to reflect who He is and what He is like. What gets in the way of God's people doing this? What role does a small group play in this?
4. How can you refute the false thinking that "If God is in it, there won't be any pain or suffering?" What truths from Scripture are you reminded of?
5. Pastor Rick shared that "Exile is when you forget your story. Exile is not just about location--it can be about the state of your soul. Exile is when you find yourself a stranger to the purposes of God." How does one get delivered out of exile?
6. The prophets were sent to draw God's people back to Himself. Look at Amos 3:1-15. How has God used other people to point out truth in your life?
7. God is looking for a community of people to passionately care about the things He cares about. List the values that were identified in today's message. Pray for our EFC family to reflect the heart of God.

BONUS CONTENT: Visit The Bible Project, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/book-overviews/> and review the books of Genesis and Exodus.

PLEASE: Share your highlights from Go Serve Week with Pastor Omar, omara@efreebn.org by June 2!

(Message outline on pages 2-12)

MESSAGE OUTLINE: “The God who hears the cries of the oppressed”

- Many scholars see Exodus, the second book of the OT as the book in which the central story of the Bible, the “Redemption” story begins!
- Egypt the superpower of its day was ruled by Pharaoh, who responded to the threat of the growing number of Israelites in his country by forcing them into slavery.
- Egypt is a superpower...built on the backs of Israelite slave labor...
- But in the book of Exodus there is a disruption...

Exodus 3:7-10

This is a God who sees and hears the cries of people

- The Israelites are oppressed, they are in misery, they are suffering —they cry out and God hears

There is a God who always hears the cry of the oppressed.

- **The cry is the catalyst**—it inaugurates God work....it's the reason that a new story is about to unfold!

God does NOT just hear the crying out, he takes action!

- The story of Exodus is how God acts!

Think about your life for a moment....

What are the moments that have shaped you the most?

- What would they be?
- How many of these came when you reached the end of your rope? When things were falling apart?
- When you were confronted with your powerlessness....nothing left to do but cry out...

For many people their cry of utter desperation was the beginning of their liberation and freedom! (addictions, in abusive relationships, etc..

- **This cry inaugurates redemptive history**...see when the system works for us, when we are capable of managing our lives what is there for God to do for us? (Picture of people having it all together.)

Egypt!

In order to understand Egypt we need to understand what transpired from the garden

- Adam and Eve go their own way, as a result things go to hell
- Their sons— first generation — murder —things fall apart quickly
- Within the next few chapters and generations the violence is escalated by 7, then by 77!
- **By chapter 6 the whole world is headed for destruction except for one man and his family**—it all started when a couple ate some fruit!

The story is a tragic progression: the broken, toxic nature at the heart of humans has spread to the entire world.

- But God made the world and it was good!
- The good that God intends for all things
- His kingdom, where he reigns and his values are lived out

And then there is what happens when entire societies, systems and empires become opposed to God's desires for the world.

- That is anti-kingdom ——Egypt is an anti-kingdom
- Egypt is what happens when sin becomes embedded in a society

- Egypt shows us how easily human nature bends towards using power to preserve privilege at the expense of the weak....

Exodus is about a people, a tribe, a nation being rescued from oppression and slavery...

- God sends Moses! —They cross the Red Sea!
- Would make a nice end of movie and story like in the Prince of Egypt

But its not the end, its the beginning

Sinai

God speaks he tells Moses

Exodus 19:4

- Its all grace.... its all a gift

Exodus 19:5-6

- Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant

Priests?

- A priest mediates the divine— a go-between God and people.
- A priest shows you what his or her God is like

It's an invitation to show the world who this God is and what this God is like.

See God who is Spirit, needs a body or bodies to reveal himself to humans. He chose Moses to be his body and voice to show Pharaoh who he is, but not just Pharaoh but all of humanity

- He invites them to be a holy nation — it's an invitation to show who this God is and what God is like...

The word nation takes us back to Genesis

Genesis is about the progression of sin, violence and death. What started out as one man killing another quickly led to an entire civilization opposed to God.

- Sin always gets a head of steam when it goes unchecked
- And that always leads to institutions, structures and cultures that are anti-Kingdom.
- Like Egypt had become— dehumanizing humans
- Which all of the former slaves (Israelites) know all too well

And God's response is to create a new people, a new nation!

One not marked by greed, violence, and abusive power, but by compassion, justice, and care for one's neighbor.

It is as if, God is saying, you have experienced Egypt, I'm calling you to be the anti-Egypt!

“For I am the Lord.....who brought you out.”

Then comes the **10 Commandments**

They were slaves, robbed of their dignity, worth and value, the “Ten” are meant to show them how to live in authentic human community.

- About Loving God and others
- A new way to be human, a new way to live in the world, in covenant with God who heard the cry of the oppressed and liberates them.

God is inviting a people, to be the body of God in this world!

Following the 10 are all sorts of commands/laws how to live this new way:

Exodus 22:26-27

Do you hear the echoes of Egypt in the command?

If they begin to oppress on an individual basis, God says I will hear —its a warning : don't become like Pharaoh or Eygpt

Exodus 22: 21-23

The warnings...

- It's as if God is saying I hear when the oppressed cry out! Remember I respond to that! I did with you!

In other words, God is saying what I did for you, make happen for others.

- The freedom from oppression that you are now experiencing—help others experience the that same freedom! The same way I heard your cry—hear others cries and act on their behalf!
- Its as if God measures their faith by how they treat the widows, ophrans, and strangers. The weak among them.....

James 1:27

See God's desire is that they as a people would bring exodus to the weak in the same way that God brought them the exodus in their weakness!

- See its always been an invitation to God's people —**An opportunity an incredible opportunity!**

Did they?

- Did they follow through?

Jerusalem (picture)

Generations later these wandering slaves had settled into the land they were promised.

- King David secured their borders! Relative peace
- David's Son Solomon comes to power,
- He is brilliant, wise, and wealthy, as a result Jerusalem begins to gain a global reputation.
- Then a queen from the land of Sheba comes to visit Solomon. She is from far away, a different land, a different religion.
- She was curious about this city, this people and their God.

Remember, God was looking for a body, a nation to show the world just who God is, and what He is like.

- And it's happening — people from far away, asking questions to learn about this God...
- She asks Solomon questions,
- She eats with him,
- She watches a worship service at the temple, tours his palace, sees all his wealth,
- After surveying all this she says

1 Kings 10:9

She does NOT say he “is” maintaining justice and righteousness—only that there can be only one reason why he has received so much blessing from God.

Justice and righteousness

- Freedom, from violence, protection from anything dehumanizing, she understands that all this wealth, power, and influence so that Solomon would use it on behalf of the poor, the weak, and suffering from injustice.

What impresses her most about this God of Solomons is that this God is the God of the broken, and the hurting.

- This “Pagan” queen from a foreign land understands what God is up to with these Jewish people living in Jerusalem.

So, it can one of two ways in Jerusalem...

They can be like God, embody his kingdom values like justice and righteousness with their resources.... or not...

1 Kings 9:15

What is forced labor?

Slaves

For the temple—The temple is to worship the God who set slaves free...

Anyone else beginning to see the irony?

- Now Solomon is building a temple for the God who set slaves free..... using slaves.

In just a few generations, the oppressed have become the oppressors.

- The ancestors of people who once cried out because of their oppression were now causing others to cry out.

- The Bible says that he was using forced labor to build “Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer.”

Do you know what these are? Military bases..

- Solomon is using all the resources and wealth to build military bases to protect the wealth and resources.

1 Kings 10:26

- Horses and chariots

Anyone remember what Egypt’s army was using to chase down and kill the Hebrew slaves?

Jerusalem is the new Egypt

1 Kings 10:29

Import and export

- Arms dealing, he is making money from violence....He discovered like many countries including ours that war is profitable....

Is that maintaining justice and righteousness?

Is that hearing the cry of the oppressed?

Is this looking out for the widow, the orphan the foreigner? The weak?

The descendants of the people who once longed for freedom from Egypt are now building another Egypt.

- Jerusalem is the new Egypt, Solomon is the new pharaoh

Sinai has been forgotten, and this puts God in a difficult position.

Remember God is looking for a people that will show the world what He is truly like!

What happens when your people become the embodiment of everything you are against?

What happens when your people are unfaithful to you and your ways? When your people look nothing like you?

The OT has a very simple message:

"God always hears the cry of the oppressed."

God cares about human suffering and the conditions that cause it...

God is looking for a community of people to care for the things God cares about.

This is what God is like, this is what God is about, this is who God is.

At the height of their power Israel misconstrued blessings as favoritism and entitlement. And they became indifferent to God and their priestly calling to be a blessing to others.

There is a word for this...A word for when you have forgotten who you are, and what you were meant to be...

Exile

- Exile is when you forget your story
- Exile is not just about location— it can be about the state of your soul!
- Exile is when you find yourself a stranger to the purposes of God.

Exile is when you forget that you were meant to be a blessing to others especially the broken and crying...

That's why the prophets!

Amos 3:1, 9-10

- Some people are being neglected, while so many others are stockpiling surplus

Amos 3:15

- Because of this Jerusalem will be destroyed...

The prophet Isaiah tells the people he will hide his eyes from them, because their hands are full of blood.

Isaiah 1:15

- The blood of being a military

Isaiah 1:13-14

God is on a mission! What is God to do with a religion that legitimizes indifference and worship that inspires indulgence?

- What is God to do when the time, money, and energy of his people are spent on structures that neglect the needs of others.
- God is patient but also pragmatic—he has a plan.

God cares about the suffering in the world and will not allow the indifference of his people stand in the way of his plans to relieve that suffering.

Amos 6:7

See the prophets came to remind the people of Sinai!

To remind them that God is looking for a body...

A people who will show others what he is like.

2 Chronicles 36:15-16

Everything falls apart, the temple is destroyed, many are killed and for those who survived, they are carried off to a land called Babylon.

And in Babylon these people become slaves, in exile...

Does this sound familiar?

This is a God who sees and hears the cries of people

God is looking for a community of people to care for the things God cares about.

He finally takes on flesh a real body, in the person of Jesus and he calls people to follow him....

What about you?

What about us?

This is what God is like, this is what God is about, this is who God is.