

EXODUS

תורת משה

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'We will start at the end of Exodus 12 today.

In this story, God is working to free His people from slavery, to make them a nation again, to give them an identity again, to make them a light to the world again. For hundreds of years they had been enslaved in Egypt, but this is the story of their exodus and freedom, and of God's relentless love for his people.

And this event, we've said in weeks past, is the central event in the history of Judaism - it was the formative intervention of God on their behalf. Likewise for Christians, we have an Exodus story, the story of God's rescuing us from our captivity to sin, from our guilt, from the punishment we deserve, to make us the objects of his love and grace and generosity for all eternity.

In many ways their story is our story.

So his love for them is His love for us. His bringing life out of death in their day is just a smaller version of the life from death God brought about in Christ and in us who trust in Him. So this isn't just history - this is what God continues to do as he brings more and more people to new life and faith in Him. This isn't only the God of history, but the God of today. And His relentless love for his people isn't just something that happened in the past, it is an ongoing reality for us today.

It's the reason we gather every week, the reason we sing, the reason we tell the stories again and again - that we might remember His work in times past so that we might be confident in His work today and into the future.

So at this point in the story, God had given warning after warning to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, commanding him to let the people go. A few times he decided to comply, but quickly his heart became hard and he changed his mind. So now after a final warning and after offering a way of escape for anyone who would bow to Him, God executes the final plague that causes Pharaoh to finally let them go.

Exodus 12 29 At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who

was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. 30 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. 31 Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. 32 Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!"

The Exodus

33 The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead." 34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders. 35 The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. 36 And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

So the Israelites are freed. They are beginning the long trek into the promised land. That journey will be fraught with difficulty and challenge and drama, but they are now a free people. God is alive after all, He is active, He is leading, He is providing, and is giving them what they'll need for the journey ahead.

And notice how before they left Egypt, God told them to borrow their neighbors' gold and silver jewelry and clothing. You wonder why He would tell them to do that - was this just to add insult to injury? Why does he want to make sure they've got great jewelry? Why did they need the bling? Was it so they could be fabulous when they cross the red sea?

Verse 36 says this was their act of plundering the Egyptians.

And plundering is what a conquering army does. They defeat the enemy in battle, and they plunder them as a way of paying their soldiers, increasing their national strength, fully defeating the enemy. The strong plunder the weak, the victors plunder the losers.

But these Jews are far from a conquering army. They've been slaves for hundreds of years. The Egyptians had been working for centuries to make sure they didn't get too strong, so there was no way they knew how to make war. In fact, the whole reason for their slavery was to keep them from becoming a conquering army:

Exodus 1:10 - Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

They were so worried the jews would conquer them in war that they oppressed them, made them weak, enslaved them, kept them from education and from learning how to fight.

And the Egyptians were the greatest empire in the world with the most powerful army in the world.

The jews didn't stand a chance on their own. They were "outgunned, outmanned, outnumbered, outplanned," but because they were oppressed, they called to God, and God intervened.

God allows them to plunder the Egyptians. Without a battle, without firing a shot, without any strength and power of their own. They win a war they never fought, they win a revolution they never planned, they are free without having to fight for their freedom.

And this is exactly what God does for us in our exodus. We were enslaved to sin, broken by years of captivity, hopeless. We were no match for our sins and their power. Our sin brought death, and there was no way our efforts were ever going to bring us out from under that curse. The battle was one we could never win.

But God fought for us. Jesus came and conquered death for us. Jesus rose again. And all those who by faith are connected to Him rise again too. And an unearned victory is ours.

The Christian message is not: "you are up against a powerful enemy in your sin, so through your moral resolve and effort you should go and fight off that enemy so God will accept you."

The Christian message is that we are powerless against our enemy. But we have a loving God who came and conquered for us, and because of his victory on our behalf, the plunder is ours. The battle is fought for us, won for us - and we go out in a victory parade that has at its heart a celebration of God and what He has done for us, not a celebration of us and our spirituality and morality.

We go out in freedom singing, but not about ourselves.

Our anthem is not "We Are the Champions." In a few weeks we'll get to Exodus 15 where Moses sings an anthem about their victory, and it is a song all about God and what He has done on their behalf. "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him." It's a God-centered celebration, they celebrate, but they are celebrating God and His triumph.

Which is great news for those of us who feel we have little to sing about.

So if at Christmas time you look back on this year and you feel like it has been a year of defeat and failure and no forward progress in your walk with God, this is a reminder that the greatest thing about us isn't something we did, but it's something that happened to us.

Our victory isn't in us. It is in Him - He is our strength and song, He is our victory, He won the battle we never could have won, He took our failures, He gives us the plunder from what He did. Yes, repent of sins, yes, make resolutions to improve, but rest in His victory. Celebrate Him! If you are His you have everything to be joyful about, even when you feel like your year has been a swamp of disappointment.

And look what God does for his people here - he turns the greatest evil for the good of his people. They needed a rescuer with access to Pharaoh. And God gave them one - by allowing Pharaoh to issue a horrible edict that all the Jewish baby boys should be thrown in the Nile. But Moses is rescued by Pharaoh's daughter, grows up in Pharaoh's house, has the connections and takes the word of God straight to Pharaoh's throne. If it weren't for that horrible day when Pharaoh ordered the babies to be killed, there would be no rescuer.

They are oppressed and could never fight, but because of that oppression they call out to God, and God intervenes because they couldn't win on their own, and he rescues. Pharaoh's plan was to weaken them, but their weakness became their greatest strength. And God turns even the evil planned against His people for good.

And remember, their story is our story. So if you feel like life has been terrible circumstances - that have happened to you, and even ones you've created, you have a God who causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him and are the called according to His purpose.

God has promised all who cling to Him by faith that He will work all things out for our good in the end. This is the great promise for God's people in Romans 8:28:

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

All things work together for good.

This promise is not that everything that happens to us is good. What happened to the Israelites in Egypt was bad - no two ways about it. They came there as refugees from a famine, were given food and a place to live and thrive, but through no fault of their own a new king came to power, was afraid of them, and brutally oppressed them. We don't have to spin that and call it good to believe this promise.

Bad things, evil things happen. So not all things are good, but all things work together for good.

This promise is not that we will understand how everything is working together for our good. These Egyptians had been slaves for centuries, so many died wondering, "Where is God? How could he ever be working this out for good?" We will go decades, and maybe a lifetime without ever grasping the reasons behind our specific suffering.

We don't always see how it all works together, but that doesn't mean it doesn't. We don't see all of history, we can't trace out the plot lines yet. We are zoomed in on one small period of time and can't see how it will all work. This promise isn't only valid if we can see how it is working out.

So if you can't see how God would possibly work your sins and failures for your good, you don't have to be able to see that to know it's true. You're clinging to Him and his superior wisdom and vantage point, to His grace, to His promise - not to your thorough knowledge of the future.

If you can't see any future because it all looks so dark - this promise isn't only true if you can see how it is true. It's true because God is true.

This promise is not that God is working all things together for what we think would be good. God knows us far better than we know ourselves, so while you think that giant check in the mail that solves all your problems is what you need, God knows what you

would become with it, all of the unanticipated consequences. He doesn't do what we think would be good, but what is good.

This promise is also not a passive prediction by God. God is not saying, "I see the future, and in the end, everything will perfectly resolve for the good of my people - totally on its own."

Because that wouldn't happen. There's no way we could look at every event that takes place and think that without God's intervention it will all harmonize for our good, in the luckiest of all possible scenarios. God must be active to make this promise come to pass.

But this promise tells us that God is actively working to make sure that when all of the plot-lines are resolved, when history has come to its conclusion, everything will have been masterfully worked together into the best of all possible worlds for his people with nothing whatsoever left over. God will use everything, ALL THINGS, to ensure the final, ultimate good of His people.

All things - everything in creation, everything in history, every event in our lives, is being worked together for our good. Even the evil that is done that God hates, He will turn and use for our good in the end. Even our foolishness and our sin that God can't stand He will somehow spin into gold for us.

And we can see this love and this divine plan working out in the Exodus, how much more can we see it from this side of the cross. Where God turns the greatest sin ever committed - the crucifixion of the pure, sinless, spotless son of God, into the greatest triumph in history.

So the people of Israel started as oppressed slaves, but now they are headed out of Egypt, a victorious army, decked out in gold.

We talked in our grace group about what they would do with that gold. My wife said they'll use it to make golden items in the tabernacle where they worshipped, and to make things like the ark of the covenant. Which is true. I said they'd make a golden calf out of it to worship the calf. (She's the optimist, I'm the pessimist.) They're both true though.

On the optimistic side, they're going to take the treasures of Egypt, the treasures of their captors, and repurpose them for the worship of God. Which again is God doing his jiu

jitsu* and turning the wealth and power of their captors who refused to honor Yahweh into the tools they would use to honor Yahweh.

On the negative side, they're also going to turn some of this gold into a golden calf and worship it and kindle the anger of God.

And those are really the two things we do with money: we worship with it, or we worship it. We see it as a gift from God to be enjoyed, shared, and given. Or we see it as our ultimate thing.

This is why the tithe is a helpful standard - people tithed to God as an act of worship all throughout the Old Testament as a way of saying "all of my wealth is the Lord's." And when we are giving less than that, in most cases, we are saying "my wealth is my Lord." "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Jesus said.

We worship our treasure, or worship with it.

And even after being rescued by God, by great wonders in Egypt, their hearts gravitated toward worshipping His gifts over the giver. And we are the same way - we take the good things God provides us and we make them our gods.

We are quick to forget our rescue, we are quick to forget what Christ has done.

This is why we gather - to be reminded of the gospel. This is why we meet together in small groups, this is why we read our bibles - to be encouraged to remember Christ and all He has done.

And it is because of our tendency to forget that God immediately gives the Israelites physical, tangible ways to remember what He has done:

Exodus 13 The LORD said to Moses, 2"Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.3 Then Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place...

"Remember" is used over 200 times in the Old Testament. So to remember how God spared their firstborn, he tells them to consecrate their firstborn - to devote them to the Lord in a special way. He tells them here to consecrate the firstborn - firstborn children

are to be dedicated to the Lord. The firstborn animals are to be sacrificed. He goes on to prescribe a feast of unleavened bread to remember their exit from Egypt. And these visible, physical, tangible reminders are there to help them remember what God did, what made them who they are, and to pass those things down to their children.

13:8 You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' 9 And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. 10 You shall therefore keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year.

13:14 And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. 15 For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' 16 It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

God gives His people physical, tangible reminders of what He did, and tells them again and again to remember these things, and to pass these things down to their children.

And what a great summary of the work of the church - to gather to remember what God has done, to pass those stories on to our children, and then scatter to bring them to others.

Because God exists and because He really intervened in the lives of His people, because these aren't just stories but the real acts of God in history that provide the foundation for their identity, God tells them: teach them to your children.

God, as the inventor of the family, has designed the family as the primary place the faith is handed down. He has said that the story of our redemption should be passed down from one generation to another so that they might believe it and participate in it too.

The people of God, whether we have kids of our own or not, have always participated somehow in handing the faith down to the next generation. When you work in kids ministry, you are helping parents hand this down, and in some cases you are the only one handing it to kids in the absence of Christian parents. And you're helping reach the largest unreached people group in our church - the next generation.

And this is all done for them with joyful ceremonies - dinners and feasts and observances. They are eating and drinking and remembering the goodness of God. With joy, passing the good news of redemption down to their children so their community can know the Lord from generation to generation.

And this is the calling for us too - to joyfully pass the good news down to our kids and the kids of the community.

And this is so much different from how Pharaoh led them. Pharaoh was harsh and cruel and demanded service, he took away the straw but didn't lower their quotas - work and I'll keep you alive. God comes and rescues them, and says remember this with a feast and with family and with joy. The faith is passed on, not with force, but with constant joyful remembrance.

In Exodus there's an obscure command that says, , ""You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk." This is a strange command, but the principle is, "Don't take that which is supposed to give life, and use it to bring death."

Don't by your teaching the life giving bible bring spiritual death to your kids.

We need to take responsibility for giving life to our kids. Our job is not just to get obedience out of our children, but to win their hearts. To get them to follow the standard, but to love the standard giver, to love the way we live.

Our homes should be homes filled with love and joy, songs and laughter, fun, and peace.

We should build companionship so our kids don't just follow our rules, but walk with us.

Proverbs 13:20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

We need to build that warm home and that sense of companionship with our kids. Much of this gets done over family meals - throughout the Bible you see that if you eat with someone, you become their companion.

So God has given us unearned victory, incredible care, great promises. God provides for us, but cautions us against worshipping the gifts over the giver. God has commanded

us to remember these things and to pass them down to our kids and to the next generation.

But God also, by grace, gives us His continued presence and guidance and light.

Pillars of Cloud and Fire

17 When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, “Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.” 18 But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle. 19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here.” 20 And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. 21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. 22 The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

So the people are led by a pillar that is a cloud at day and fire at night.

And they are guided on a pretty erratic looking route - they head out like you would expect them to, over land. But God knew the Philistines were there. And they'd have to fight to go through there. And they weren't ready for war yet. So God in his patience, changes their route.

Which, we'll see next time, looked to Pharaoh like they were confused. To them, it wouldn't have looked like God didn't know what He was doing. But, in his care and patience He led them in the way that was best for them.

And notice how it doesn't say God sent a cloud or a fire to lead them. Verse 21 says the Lord went before them in this pillar. This was God's presence with them, giving them His guidance, his light by night, and a constant reminder that He was with them.

And remember, their story is our story. As God was with them, so He's with us.

Matthew 1:18-25 “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy

Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Jesus came to be Immanuel, God with us. He lived among us, gave guidance in his word. Gave light. Showed the fire of his holiness.

And now, by His Spirit, He is with us.

This is the hope we cling to.

Exodus 12:29-13:22

The Journey Begins

- I. God Equips His People for the Journey (Exodus 12:29-36)
 - A. Unearned victory
 - B. Providential care
 - C. Provision for the journey

- II. God calls his people to faith (Exodus 13:1-16)
 - A. A call to remembrance
 - B. A call to pass on the faith

- III. God Accompanies His People (Exodus 13:17-22)
 - A. With His Presence
 - B. With His Guidance
 - C. With His Light

For Discussion in Small Groups

1. How is God's presence experienced today?
2. Where was God's presence most significant in history?
3. What physical, tangible remembrances of Christ are in your life and your family's life?
4. If you have children, what are you doing to pass the faith to your children? How are you making disciples of them?
5. How does God guide us today?