

Sermon 7/6/2020

- The book of Exodus describes how God brought the nation of Israel into being by two powerful and creative acts. The first was the liberation of an enslaved people from the clutches of their Egyptian oppressors. The second, was binding together the people in a covenant relationship with their God.
- Our reading today contains a significant transition in the trajectory of Israel. Up until now, they had been slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years, but God heard their cry and called Moses and Aaron to lead them into freedom.
- No other OT book gives such powerful expressions of God's action with and for the people of Israel like the book of Exodus does.
- The whole witness of scripture tells of God's action with and for the people of God, but no OT book states it like the book of Exodus.
- Some eg, of God's saving power in Exodus include: saving baby Moses from slaughter by being placed in the basket and raised in pharaoh's palace; then in the wilderness, God speaking to Moses through the burning bush; back in Egypt, the staff of Moses becoming a serpent before the Egyptian magicians (indicating the unity between brothers Moses and Aaron, and the authority of Moses over the king of Egypt); the 10 plagues that manifest as signs and wonders which God performed before Pharaoh signalling the superiority of God over the dark forces at work in Egypt.
- So, there's just a few simple signs and wonders to start the day with – most of us have a cuppa, not God!
- Every time God moves upon the earth there are signs and wonders and miracles.
- This story isn't the first display of God's power, neither is it the last, but it is the most significant in the OT – because it gets the attention of the most powerful nation on earth, and all the surrounding nations; and it bring the greatest freedom Israel had ever, and would ever know.
- The next few chapters uncover 10 plagues God sent upon Egypt, to display His glory to Pharaoh and the people: Frogs; gnats; flies; plagues on cattle and people; boils; hail; locusts; darkness; death of the first born – not revenge for Pharaoh killing the first born of the

Israelites, but a re-claiming of the people of Israel as God's first-born people, making them distinct from all other people.

- All ten plagues were a display of God's power in the form of signs, wonders and miracles.
- God did not perform these miracles to punish a wicked Pharaoh, or to show-off His might.
- 1. There are two reasons God does miracles: firstly, to show humanity that He is above all other gods, all created things and all principalities, powers and rulers.
- The signs and wonders that God performs declare His greatness, His power, His majesty, His glory, and His sovereignty over all things in heaven and on earth! That's why we sing, 'How Great Thou Art'!
- God performs signs and wonders and miracles so that the world will know He is LORD:

"I will lay my hand upon Egypt and bring my people the Israelites, company by company, out of the land of Egypt. ⁵ The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out from among them." (Exodus 7:4-5)

2. To set us free from oppression so that we might worship Him:

"Say to Pharaoh, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you to say, "Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness."' (Exodus 7:14)

- God does, signs and wonders and miracles to set oppressed people free so that they may worship Him.
- This is clearly seen in the Gospels through the person and work of Jesus, and introduced to us in Luke, when Jesus said:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4:18-19)

- Jesus fulfils Isaiah's prophecy that declares release, recovery and freedom to all who receive Christ.
- So, the two reasons God performs signs and wonders and miracles is to show His sovereign glory and unmatched power; and to set oppressed people free.
- The story we read in Exodus demonstrates both the sovereign power of God, and freedom from slavery.

- The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt by Yahweh in the Old Testament is parallel in importance to the resurrection of Christ in the New Testament.
- The resurrection of Jesus is an act of our faithful, powerful, gracious God, unmatched by any other in all of creation. And, it set the whole of creation free from the tyranny of sin.
- A world of sin, violence and death rendered its verdict on Jesus, but God has rendered a contrary verdict – reversing, cancelling and overcoming the verdict of the world.
- The light of the resurrected Christ dispels darkness. His love cannot be held captive by a world drenched in hatred, violence, selfishness, fear and sickness.
- Both the deliverance of Israel and the resurrection of Christ reverberate throughout all of creation, “I am LORD of ALL! Worship ME!”
 - Where in the world do you see violence, hatred, selfishness and fear, or sadness, loneliness, hurt and shame?
 - Can you declare that the power and love of God is greater than all of this? Can you declare that Jesus has taken all of these things on the cross; and He has risen above them?
- Whether you see darkness and chaos and oppression in your life, or in the lives of people around you – God hasn’t changed. His love is eternal, and His power is still great.
- Don’t grow weary of declaring the love and power of God into darkness and chaos, into oppression and fear, into sadness and pain.
- We have established that reason the God performs signs and wonders and miracles, is to declare His sovereignty to all creation, and set us free to worship Him; let us consider how God does them:

“The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” ¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” ¹² He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.” (Exodus 3:9-12)

- God uses ordinary people to perform His extraordinary work.

- God looks at the heart of people, not the outward appearance of skin colour, education, gender, looks or money. God sees the heart, and chooses to manifest His power through those who are open and responsive to Him.

D. L. Moody said that “Moses spent forty years in Pharaoh's court thinking he was somebody; forty years in the desert learning he was nobody; and forty years showing what God can do with somebody who found out he was nobody.”

- If you recall the message a few weeks ago where Jesus was at the wedding at Cana and He used ordinary clay pots to perform His miracle.
- Well, here we are again, God using ordinary people who are open and responsive to His call, to do extraordinary signs and wonders and miracles.
- Every great move of God displays signs and wonders to declare His Lordship; and to set people free.
- And every great move of God uses somebody who thinks they're nobody!
- What is God's invitation to you today?
 - Perhaps an invitation to consider that God still does signs and wonders to declare His Lordship and to set oppressed people free.
 - Perhaps an invitation to consider that God could and would actually work through YOU!
 - Or an invitation to consider that God could and would actually do signs and wonders and miracles through YOU!
 - Or maybe, an invitation to be salt and light by declaring in word and in deed the love and power of God in the darkness and chaos of this world.
- In this moment as we prepare our hearts to partake of communion, turn the eyes of your heart towards Jesus...look full in His wonderful face...and let the things that weigh on your heart grow strangely dim...as His glory, power, love and grace surrounds you and upholds you – to be and do all that He has created and called you to.

Song: “How great Thou Art. “

Words and music by Stuart Wesley Keene Hine

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