

***The Story Series***  
***Week 4: Moses, Part 1***  
***Deliverance***

***Rev. Craig M. Sturm     Trinity Lutheran Church, Sherman Texas***

It's been wonderful these past weeks as we have focused on the stories of the Old Testament, stories many of us learned as children in Sunday School but haven't looked at since. There's the story of creation (with Adam and Eve and that crafty serpent). There's the story of Noah and the great flood. Old Abraham and Sarah and the long journey of faith they embarked upon.

Although it's been wonderfully fun to look at these Old Testament stories once again, as we considered these people of faith, we realized that there is a problem. A BIG problem. The problem is this: we humans prefer our own way over the ways of God. Although God has spelled out very clearly how we are to live, although God has promised to bless those who live by his ways, we still have chosen to live life by our own rules. God's Grand Vision for his creation was to have an intimate, lasting relationship with us, but our rebellious choices have built a wall of separation between us and God. It's a problem, and it needs to be solved if there is any hope of our relationship with God being reconciled. That's the bad news.

The good news is that even though we have disobeyed and disappointed God, God refuses to give up on us. This is what *The Story* of the Bible is all about – God's relentless pursuit to tear down that wall that separates us from God. Although we have jeopardized our relationship with God through our selfish choices, God desires to forgive us so that our relationship with him can be healed.

This is what the Bible is all about: God's relentless pursuit to prove to us how much he loves us despite our mistakes and our rebellious choices.

We will see this truth being proclaimed again today as we take a look at the life story of Moses in the book of Exodus. Now let's remember where we left off last week. Because of a global-like famine, Joseph invites his family who is living in Canaan to move to Egypt where there is plenty of food and pasture land to raise their sheep. (*see map on last page to find journey from Canaan to Egypt, Nile River, Red Sea, Mt. Sinai*)

Jacob and his family live in Egypt for some 400 years. During this time, these peasant nomadic people were absorbed into the Egyptian underclass, meaning they were forced into crushing labor as slaves to build the royal palaces of the Egyptian empire. The number of descendants of Abraham's family (referred to as the national of Israel in the Bible) had become so great in number – thousands upon thousands – that the Egyptian Pharaoh started to get a little nervous, intimidated. He was afraid that this large nation would try to rebel and attempt to overthrow the empire.

In order to keep that from happening, Pharaoh did the unthinkable. He ordered his soldiers to throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile River in order to stunt the growth of the nation of Israel. It was a barbaric act of population control.

It would seem that this would be the end of God's plan to create this great nation of people by which God's Grand Vision would ultimately come to fruition. But we should know by now that God will not fail. God is in control. This would be a perfect opportunity for God to show up once again to prove his sovereignty and trustworthiness. And that's exactly what God does. And when God shows up once again in the opening chapters of Exodus, God reveals to us three things:

First, God reveals his **name** to us. If we want to be in a relationship with God, it's helpful to know God's name. Second, God reveals his **power**. Pharaoh is about to find out that he is not the most powerful force in the whole world. Third, God reveals his **plan** for his people. God reveals yet another aspect of his rescue plan to save us. And he makes all of these things known through a person named Moses.

God speaks to Moses through that famous burning bush experience and reveals his disgust with Pharaoh enslaving God's people. God says, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. So," God says, "I will come down to rescue my people from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile land – a land flowing with milk and honey."

Moses, of course, is thrilled with this news. But then God reveals his game plan to Moses. God says, "I want you, Moses, to go to the mighty Pharaoh and demand him to let my people go!" Gulp!

Pharaoh is the most powerful man in Egypt. Pharaoh actually believes that he is the son of the mighty Egyptian god 'Rah.' Moses feels a tad unqualified to stand in Pharaoh's presence, much less to make any demands of him.

In Exodus 4, Moses says to God, "Please, O God, send someone else – anyone else but me!" I've heard those words before. I've heard those words come out of my own mouth, and out of yours! Moses, who feels unqualified, unworthy, too inexperienced, is exactly the kind of person God is looking for: one who must fully rely on God because he knows that by his own efforts it's just not going to work.

Over and over again, Moses tries to make God see that he is not the guy for the job. But God reassures Moses by saying, "I will be with you, and anything that you need, I will provide. I will equip you for this task." All God asks of Moses is this: Allow me to work through you.

Think about it: that's all God asks of any of us. God says to us, "Allow me to work through you. Allow my love for the world to be made known through your words and deeds. Allow me to be seen as a trustworthy God by your willingness to totally surrender

your lives into my hands. Allow my concern for those who have so little be made known by your reaching out and sharing what I have given you. It's the only favor God asks of us: "Allow me to work through you."

Moses finally gets up the courage to go, but he knows that if he is going to speak for God, it would be helpful to know God's name. "I'm sure Pharaoh is going to ask," Moses says, "so who should I tell him sent me?" God responds, "I Am." Period. I know exactly what Moses was thinking. "I am *who?*" What kind of name is that, God? God responds once again, "I Am." In other words, "I Am who I Am." In Hebrew, it's "YHWH" (or Jehovah in the English). God tells Moses and us that "I will be whoever or whatever I need to be in order to fulfill my will." God – the One who always was, and always is, and always will be – is the faithful, dependable God in whom we can put our hope and trust and not be disappointed. That's who I am, God says.

Moses will reveal the very name of God to Pharaoh and to all of the Egyptians, and he will inform them, "All of the powerful things that you are about to experience are sponsored by 'I Am.'"

Yahweh is sending such horrific things upon you to prove to you that the Egyptian gods you worship, the idols in which you give your time, talents, and treasures to are not worthy of your devotion. Yahweh is about to send such horrific things upon you to express his disgust for the way you have enslaved his people. When you experience the power of the one, true God, the foolishness of your ways will be revealed.

God shows his awesome power to prove that he is the one, true God to be worshipped. God does this by unleashing 10 horrific plagues upon the Egyptians. The Nile River is turned to blood. Frogs, gnats, flies and locusts swarm the area. The livestock are plagued with disease; boils form on people's skin. Massive storms of fire and hail develop, then darkness 24/7. God takes no pleasure in punishing people, but God will stop at nothing to ensure – without a shadow of a doubt – that he is the one true God.

Then comes one final blow, the 10<sup>th</sup> plague – the death of all firstborn sons. This isn't payback for Pharaoh drowning all of baby Israelites boys in the Nile River. This 10<sup>th</sup> plague is a symbolic maneuver on God's part, letting us in on what God's final move is going to be in his rescue plan for all of humanity.

On the evening before the 10<sup>th</sup> plague, God instructs his people to take an unblemished lamb, a perfect lamb, and slaughter it. Then take some of the blood of that perfect lamb and smear it on the wooden doorframes of their homes. Then, when the Lord passes through the land of Egypt that night to kill all the firstborn sons, when God sees the blood (*listen carefully*) when God sees the blood on the wooden posts it will serve as a sign for the Lord to "pass over" you. Death will not come upon you and your household."

Truth be told, the Israelite's story and our story is much the same. We are in the same boat as the Israelites. We are enslaved. Not by the Egyptians, but by our own sin. Our sinful human nature jeopardizes our relationship with God. God has shown us the way to

a blest, abundant life, but we have not chosen that path. We have chosen our own way, a way unbeknownst to us that leads to a dead end. As the Scriptures say, “We are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves.”

God wants to free us from our bondage to sin and so God looks sin straight in the face and says, “Let my people go!” But in order for us to be released, we have to have the blood of the Perfect Lamb on the doorpost of our soul. Because if God were to pass through this day and demand your life, and God did not see the blood of the Lamb upon the doorpost of your soul – I tell you this out of love and concern – your life will not be delivered. Your life will not be spared.

In the book of Exodus, God is making it overtly clear what is necessary for our relationship with him to be reconciled. We need the blood of the Lamb to be saved. We need the blood of the Lamb for our sin to be wiped clean.

So the question becomes, “Where do we get the blood?” When we fast forward *The Story* to the New Testament, we meet a man named Jesus Christ. And knowing his story makes these words from the Passover story all the more meaningful.

In the gospels we find ourselves in Jerusalem, standing beneath the Cross of Calvary, watching in horror as Jesus Christ – the Perfect, unblemished Lamb of God – is nailed to the cross. And as he is nailed to that cross, his blood gets smeared upon it. And God once again says: “When the blood of the sacrificed Lamb of God is smeared upon the wooden posts, it will serve as a sign for me to pass over your sins, and death will not come upon you.”

In the opening chapter of John’s Gospel, John the Baptist sees this Jesus coming towards him and he says, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Jesus Christ is the blood that we need in order to be saved. Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb that God will use to pass over our sin.

Jesus Christ is God’s Master Plan for bringing his Grand Vision to fruition. God desires to restore, repair the broken relationship we have with him because of our rebellious choices. Jesus Christ is the one who will have the power and the authority to break down the wall of separation between us and God. Jesus Christ dying on the cross will be our assurance that God has not given up on us, that God loves us, no matter what.

“The blood of the sacrificed Lamb of God, smeared upon the wooden posts, will serve as a sign for God to pass over your sins, and death will not come upon you.”

Let us pray:

O God, we are enslaved by our sinful deeds.

Apply the blood of the Lamb of Jesus upon the doorframe of our souls.  
so that death will pass over us.

Let it be so. Amen.

The World of Ancient Israel

