

The Great Escape

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at Christchurcheastbay.org. If you could please remain standing for the reading of God's Word. A reading from the book of Exodus, chapter 14, starting from verse 1 all the way to verse 31. Then the Lord said to Moses, Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi-Hahiroth between Migdal and the sea.

They are to encamp by the sea directly opposite Baal-Zipphon. Pharaoh will think the Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion hemmed in by the desert.

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army. And the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.

[1:09] So the Israelites did this. When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, What have we done? We've let the Israelites go and have lost their services.

So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. He took 600 of the best chariots along with all the other chariots of Egypt. With officers over all of them.

The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. So that he pursued the Israelites who were marching out boldly. The Egyptians, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops, pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi-Hahiroth opposite Baal-Zipphon.

As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up. And there were the Egyptians marching after them. They said to Moses, Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?

What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, leave us alone? Let us serve the Egyptians. It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert.

[2:15] Moses answered the people, Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today, you will never see again.

The Lord will fight for you. You need only to be still. Then the Lord said to Moses, Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on.

Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them.

And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.

Then the angel of God who had been traveling in front of Israel's army withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel.

[3:13] Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side, so neither went near the other all night long. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea.

And all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. During the last watch of the night, the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion.

He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, Let's get away from the Israelites. The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt. Then the Lord said to Moses, Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.

Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen.

[4 : 25] The entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea, not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in Him and in Moses, His servant.

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever. Amen. You can take your seats. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that your hand is mightier than any Pharaoh's hand.

And we pray that having witnessed this, in you showing up in history time and time again to redeem your people, that you would give us that fear of the Lord, give us that faith in who you are and what you're capable of.

God, show us your greatness, we pray, in the preaching of your word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. All right. So, if I could give myself a grade on parenting this past week, at best, I'd give myself a C-.

[5 : 50] All right. C-. It was a rough week. Every morning, a battle. Every morning, a rush. Hurry filled our home. Come on. Let's go. What are you doing? Get moving.

Hurry up. Obey. Or else. Right. I was loud. I was mean. I was forceful. I was domineering. This week, I cracked the whip.

Like, more than I can ever recall. At best, C-. Parenting. Now, what in the world does this have to do with Moses and the crossing of the Red Sea?

I guess what I'm trying to say is that this week, in the Ong household, I was Pharaoh. I was Pharaoh. Or at least, I caught myself living out the same imagination that animated Pharaoh and his empire.

An imagination dominated by fear and insecurity. And the sense that, man, if things don't go according to my agenda, if I start losing the order and the security, even just in my own household, everything could just fall apart.

[6 : 56] So I better control everyone and everything around me, no matter the cost. And if ever my control seems to be slipping out of my fingers, more pressure, more force, whatever it takes to get everyone, everything back in line.

That was Pharaoh's way in Egypt. That was my way in our home this past week. You know, I think that for a lot of us, when we approach the scriptures, we often only ever identify, though, with the victims and the underdogs, or maybe the heroes that we're trying to emulate and celebrate.

Like, we can open this book of Exodus, and we think to ourselves, okay, we need to have faith like Moses, like the Israelites, because look, God delivered the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt. He defeated their oppressors, and the power of God's mighty hand went on full display when the people cried out to him in faith.

So praise God, trust him in tough times, and walk by faith, because even when there seems no way, God can make a way. Sermon's over, right? But what if there's something else going on in this story that's just as important, but way easier to miss?

What if this story invites us not merely to identify with the Hebrew slaves and with Moses, but to recognize something of Pharaoh and his ways in ourselves?

[8 : 15] What if Exodus 14 is not just about how God gets his people out of Egypt, but also about how God gets Egypt out of his people? Now, in case you're new, last week, our lead pastor, Jonathan, he opened up our series in the book of Exodus, where we're gonna be giving special attention to the Ten Commandments, but before we get there, we're spending a few weeks on what happened before the giving of the law.

Because see, the Ten Commandments, they don't start right there on page one of the book of Exodus. No, before God ever tells his people how to live, and this is so key to understanding the Ten Commandments, before God ever tells his people how to live, he delivers them from slavery. His main intention is not to restrict, but to liberate and empower, and that's what we saw last week in the burning bush, in the Passover story. So coming into Exodus chapter 14 today, the Hebrews, they're free now, no longer slaves.

The incredible, the impossible, has happened after 430 pilgrim years in Egypt, and generations of slavery, the journey out of Egypt has begun.

And they're being led by God himself in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. And they're finally on their way. But then here, in chapter 14, in verse 2, God directs them to do something quite strange.

[9:34] Verse 2 says, tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp by the sea. For some reason, after leading them in one direction, God's now telling them to turn around and backtrack.

Far from the most efficient route out of Egypt, God directed them to take a route that actually made them look silly and foolish and vulnerable and confused. And yet this is exactly his intention.

God says in verses 3 and 4, I want you to look like you're wandering and confused and trapped. In fact, I'm planning for Pharaoh to pursue you with everything he's got, all his army, his horses, his chariots, all the things that made him a great and successful king over Egypt.

And it is precisely when Pharaoh comes at you with the fullness of his power and his glory that I will show the world who all the power and all the glory actually belong to.

See, the Exodus story isn't primarily about Moses or the Israelites and the miraculous things that happened to them. No, it's a story about the glory of God over all other powers.

[10:37] He's in complete control of the story and everything always plays out exactly as he has intended. So, just as God predicted, in verse 5, Pharaoh is filled with regret.

Egypt's whole economic advantage, their whole low-cost labor force, the unjust engine of Pharaoh's empire, the Hebrews were no longer their slaves. And especially after 10 severe plagues that Egypt just suffered, Pharaoh's entire world is crumbling.

His agenda, his security, his empire, his status, his legacy, it's all at risk. The control that the pharaohs of Egypt had enjoyed for generations was now slipping through his fingers.

So, his back's against the wall and now what does he do? Well, the only thing he knows to do, right? The only thing he could ever imagine or believe that would work, he reaches for more power, more force, more pressure.

The whole of his army, every horse, all the chariots of Egypt, it says. Because this is how you get control back. This is how you secure your own desired outcomes. You crack the whip as hard as you need to until everyone and everything bends the knee to you.

[11:45] So, even after, again, suffering 10 terrible plagues and being on the losing side of this battle between the God of the Hebrews and all the Egyptians' most powerful gods, in Pharaoh's mind, because of the success that he's seen, the success that he's seen in his chariots and his horsemen and his army, time and time again, he believes that he still has a chance.

And because he's never known a God like Yahweh, he's never known a God who is completely all-powerful, he's never known a God who is incapable of losing, in Pharaoh's imagination, he's still got a fighting chance to regain control by force.

So, just as God designed, Pharaoh gears up. And with every military, every technological advantage at his disposal, he goes to reacquire his escaped assets, the Hebrews.

And in no time, the Egyptians are on the Hebrews' heels. And as they approach, verse 10 says, the Israelites looked up. And they were terrified, and they cried out to the Lord, verse 11, was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?

What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, leave us alone? Let us serve the Egyptians. It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert.

[13:05] Did you hear that? They are literally standing free outside of Egypt. And yet Egypt is not yet outside of them. It would have been better, they said.

It would have been better to live as slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt than to die as sons of Yahweh in the desert. Though no longer slaves to Egypt, they still were slaves to the fear and to the threat of Egypt.

And although Pharaoh no longer controlled Hebrew bodies, he still had a hold on Hebrew hearts, Hebrew minds, Hebrew imaginations, looking up at Pharaoh's army in full force, watching those unstoppable chariots inch closer and closer and closer, hearing the crash of the roaring waves behind them, feeling the mist of the Red Sea on their backs, Israel could only conceive of two possible outcomes.

They could only imagine two possible futures for themselves. In this moment where they were trapped between their former enslavers and the raging sea behind them, as far as they could see, as far as Pharaoh could see, as far as anyone could see, either go back and live as slaves or go forward and die.

Slavery or the sea. And what's so striking is that Pharaoh and Israel, you know, they basically agree here on all the possible options. Pharaoh thinks, I've got them.

[14:23] They're trapped. There's nowhere to escape. And the Hebrews also think, he's got us. We're trapped. And there's nowhere to escape. The dominance, even the apparent omnipotence of Egypt continues to shape their imaginations, their sense of what is possible.

Even after witnessing the ten plagues that God used to free them from Egypt, their fears and complaints, their imaginations reveal who they really think is the most powerful one in control of this moment.

Effectively, Israel believes the same thing about power that Pharaoh does. They're just on the other end of it. And therefore, they believe they're doomed. They're hopeless. They're trapped with no way out.

Riding his chariot, Pharaoh says, I have the power, therefore I determine the future. And facing the chariots, the Israelites agree. Pharaoh has the power and therefore, he determines our future.

They'd gotten out of Egypt, but Egypt hadn't gotten out of them.

Both Pharaoh and Israel, they were both living out of the same understanding, both ruled by the same imagination. The same imagination that ruled me this week. When I was screaming at my girls at the breakfast table, higher volume, more pressure, more threats.

[15:34] Why? Because that's how I implicitly believed the world to work. That's what I believed would secure my desired outcomes. Pressure, tyranny, aggression, the ultimate tools for getting what we want.

In my imagination, there was no other way. This is the only way to get stuff done, right? And whether you're on Pharaoh's side of it or Israel's side of it, this imagination is just so prevalent and influential if you pay attention to it.

Whether it's, I have to throw everything I've got at this thing to secure my future, to secure my academic outcomes, my relational outcomes, my financial, my career outcomes, my health outcomes, more effort, better technique, higher investment because if I don't concentrate everything I've got to make this happen, who will?

Whether you come at it like Pharaoh or whether you come at it like Israel, like, I'm done for. I'm stuck. I'm trapped. And there's no possible happy ending because I have no power, no resources, no nothing, no hope for salvation, no hope for joy, no hope for my marriage, my children, my broken relationships, my health, everything's already been decided for my life and every possible scenario stinks.

See, whether we're desperately trying to control our circumstances or terrified because of how little control we have before the powers that be, we're basically still living inside a Pharaoh's imagination under the shadow of his oppressive empire where the future belongs to whoever can crack the whip the hardest.

[17:07] But here in Exodus chapter 14, God invites his people to expand and to even re-imagine our imaginations, to inform our imaginations by the goodness and the glory and the infinite omnipotence of our holy God.

Precisely, precisely when Pharaoh thinks that he's got them right where he wants them, and precisely when Israel thinks that Pharaoh's got them right where he wants them, trapped with no possible salvation, Moses, the prophetic mediator, the mouthpiece of God, he speaks to them. Three commands and one big truth. Verse 13, first command, fear not, do not be afraid. Second command, stand firm, or better yet, stand still.

you could translate this. And third command, see. Behold, feast your eyes upon the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today, you will never see again.

And then this is probably my favorite part of the whole passage in verse 14. One big truth and one requirement. The Lord will fight for you. You need only to be still.

[18:24] The battle belongs to the Lord, he's saying. You cannot fight your way free. You cannot swim your way free. You cannot deliver your own deliverance. You must allow Yahweh to do that for you.

You cannot do what only Yahweh can do. You need not fight or win your own battles. You need only be still and know that God is God. So, God invites his people to go from bewildered by the hand of Pharaoh to beholding the mighty hand and outstretched arm of God.

When in verse 10 it says the Israelites looked up, saw the Egyptians and were terrified, now here in verse 13 their Lord invites them to look again but now higher toward him.

To see reality for what it really is at every point held and guided by the mighty hand of Yahweh. He wants to fix their eyes on a power and on possibilities far beyond those of Pharaoh's imagination. Because, as he said in verse 4, he says it again in verses 17 and 18, he's on a mission to manifest his glory, to make himself known to Israel, to the great and mighty empire of Egypt and really to all the watching world here between the Egyptians and the Red Sea where the salvation of his people seems like an absolute impossibility.

[19:43] Yahweh makes himself known as the God who creates possibilities that neither Pharaoh nor Israel nor anyone else could have imagined. And how? By making a way where there was no way, dry ground through the middle of the sea.

It's incredible, this crossing of the Red Sea. Now, if you are a modern Western scientific person, that should sound pretty amazing to you, right? That just, that doesn't happen, right?

And as a side note, if you're here and you struggle with Christianity because of stories like this, we're super glad you're here. We'd love to speak to you about your obstacles and objections but what we also want to communicate to you is, hey, at the heart of the Christian faith is a crucified Messiah who was raised on the third day.

And Christians, you know, we aren't a gullible people but what I would say is we do have a very expansive, joyful, and hopeful imagination when it comes to what our God can and cannot do. And we'd love to invite you to try that on and to imagine and dream with us. But back to the story again, for modern scientific people like us, right? This Red Sea event, it should sound super amazing, supernatural, right?

[20:57] Unnatural. But man, if you were an Egyptian, if you were an Israelite, if you were someone steeped in the mythological culture of the ancient Near East, man, this wasn't just some unnatural, supernatural occurrence.

This was so much more than that. I want you to notice what might seem like a minor detail in verses 2 and 9. Do you see where it indicates the location of this event? It says that they're camped out opposite of this place called Baal Zephon.

If you know some of the other parts of your Bible, Baal was this God that many people in the region worshipped. That's because this was an area where the worship of Baal Zephon was very dominant.

He was known as the storm God. Baal Zephon was associated with the storm God Baal known throughout the region for his hard-fought victory over Yam, which means the sea. Alright, so Baal Zephon, he's known as the storm God who's defeated the great power of the sea.

And in fact, in the world of Exodus, across the ancient Near East, in the stories people told about their gods and the ordering of their universe, the sea was often seen as a threatening, ominous, chaotic power that the gods waged violent war against, triumphing only through fierce and dangerous struggle.

[22:14] And they had to fight in order to establish their supremacy and their kingship. So you think about the Babylonian myth of Marduk defeating Tiamat, right? Or here, Baal defeating Yam, the sea.

But, in both these stories, these are battles where the gods have worthy opponents. They have rivals and so they need weapons. Baal has to have another god make special weapons so that he could defeat Yam, the sea.

Marduk goes to war with a bow and arrow, with a club, a net, lightning, and wind. Because these gods are going up against powers that can actually threaten them. In the ancient Near Eastern imagination, the sea was a power that threatened both men and even their gods.

And so, in these stories, there's always a struggle, there's always danger, there's always risk and uncertainty about who's gonna come out on top. But now let's come back to Exodus 14 and watch Yahweh and the sea.

Is there a battle here? Is there a struggle? Is there any uncertainty, peril, or risk? None. None, because the sea isn't another god vying for power against Yahweh.

[23 : 24] No, the sea is powerful. Yes, more powerful than Israel, more powerful than Pharaoh, more powerful than many of the ancient Near Eastern gods. But to Yahweh, the sea is his creation.

And from the very beginning of the creation of the world, he looked out upon the ominous, threatening, chaotic, disorderly deep, and he simply spoke it into order.

He spoke life into the world with the holy breath of his authoritative words. And he does so here again. Verse 21, Yahweh sends the wind, he sends his breath, and the sea moves, the waters divide, dry ground appears.

And when he wants the waters back where they were, they go back. And he even uses his human servant mediator, Moses, to accomplish this. And Moses himself doesn't even struggle. So even as Yahweh fights for Israel, he is at the same time not fighting against the sea or any rival.

The sea isn't his rival, it's his servant. And that is what Exodus wants us to see about Israel's God. Yahweh isn't just another ancient storm god who happens to be stronger than Baal and the gods of Egypt.

[24 : 30] He's not Marduk with a better arsenal of weapons. It's not like he's got better tech and gear than Pharaoh with his 600 best chariots. Yahweh is simply, he's not simply the strongest god in the same category as these other gods.

No, he's in a category all of his own. Whereas Baal has to defeat the sea to establish his kingship, whereas Marduk has to conquer Tiamat to establish his supremacy, Yahweh commands the sea because he's already king.

He doesn't become sovereign by winning this battle. The battle reveals that he's always been sovereign. Yahweh isn't merely showing Israel that he's a better warrior than Pharaoh. He's showing them that he, and he alone, is the creator.

And when the creator is in the story, Pharaoh doesn't get to decide what is possible. The sea doesn't get to decide what is possible. Even the apparent limits of creation don't get to decide and give the final word because the creator can make a way where there is no way.

When Pharaoh thought that the sea was his trap, Yahweh turned Pharaoh's trap into Israel's highway. This treacherous, threatening, unwieldy body of death, this raging sea, the thing everyone thought marked the end of the road for God's people, God made a way through it.

[25 : 47] A way to salvation through the waters, a way to bring glory to himself as the creator and savior God who he is. You know, another way you could tell the story of the exodus is as the story of the creator bringing about a new creation and particularly of subverting Pharaoh's anti-creation agenda, his anti-creation dominion.

If you think about it, Pharaoh's really been an anti-creator figure from the beginning of the story in Exodus. If you look back in Exodus chapter 1 verse 7, it says, the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful, they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers, and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.

Does that language sound familiar to you? Sounds like Genesis 1, right? The beginning of the Bible, Genesis 1, 28, God creates human beings, he blesses them, and he says, be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.

And yet, what does Pharaoh do when he sees the Hebrews being fruitful and multiplying and filling his land? He says, this has got to stop. This is not good for me. This is not good for the world, for my empire.

So he enslaves them. He reduces image bearers to units of production who make bricks to build store cities so that he can, you know, accumulate and store and accumulate and store and produce and consume and produce and consume without limit and at the expense of his expendable slaves.

[27 : 15] And yet, when slavery doesn't stop their fruitfulness, they continue to grow in number. He commands that their sons be killed. He cranks up the oppression. Throw every Hebrew boy into the Nile by violently opposing the creator's blessing upon the world that his people be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth with his image.

Pharaoh, as an anti-creator character, not only hurts the Hebrews, but he even hurts his own empire. Because what happens when God looks down upon his people crying out under the thumb of this Egyptian anti-creator?

Well, creation itself starts to come apart in Egypt through the plagues, right? The Nile, the source of Egypt's life, turns to blood. Fish and livestock die. Crops are destroyed.

The sun stops giving light. Darkness covers the land. It's like they're going backwards from the creation story. And death comes upon every household that has not placed its faith in the true creator God.

Under Pharaoh's reign, within his imagination, creation, Egypt experiences de-creation. The national order that Pharaoh was so desperate to control comes apart in his bloody hands.

[28:23] And all of his, and all of this, it reaches its climax here in Exodus 14 at the Red Sea, where just as Pharaoh had weaponized the waters of the Nile against those Hebrew boys, now the waters of the Red Sea are about to fall in judgment upon the warriors of Egypt.

But you know what's interesting is that for God's people, those same waters became the place of new creation and life and salvation. They're like baptismal waters for them.

Just like in the beginning and just like when God started over with Noah, the wind blew, the waters moved, the ground appeared, and God's people emerged on the other side. But why only for Israel and not also for Egypt?

When Hebrews chapter 11, verse 29, it says that by faith, the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land. But when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

Did you hear the difference? It's by faith. By faith in God's word. When God told them in verse 15, tell the Israelites to move on, they did.

[29:27] They simply took step by step by faith, walking through the treacherous sea between the walls of water that they just had to trust would not come collapsing down on them.

But Egypt, Egypt charges in trusting not in the word of the Lord, but trusting in what Egypt had always put its trust in, in horses, in chariots, in military strength.

And right there in the middle of the sea, that's where Pharaoh's imagination finally dies. Because the chariots can't save them. Verse 25 says, God jams their wheels.

Think about that. The very technology that made Egypt look unstoppable. The very thing Pharaoh trusted to secure his desired future became useless, a hindrance to him.

And the Egyptians finally recognize here and cry out what Israel should have known and believed all along. Yahweh is fighting for them. Yahweh is fighting for his people and not as some king kidnapping, not as like a king who's like kidnapping some immigrant laborers to build his own alternative empire.

[30:33] No. He doesn't call them to himself to be his slaves. Do you remember what Yahweh told Pharaoh all the way back in Exodus chapter 4? In Exodus chapter 4, verse 22 and 23, Yahweh tells Moses to say to Pharaoh, Israel is my firstborn son.

Let my son go so he may worship me. And this is who the Hebrews have always been in God's eyes, not Pharaoh's slaves, Yahweh's sons, Yahweh's children.

So you see what God is doing here at the Red Sea in the whole book of Exodus. This isn't just God getting his son out of Pharaoh's house. He's beginning to get the mind of a slave out of his sons, out of Israel.

Because slaves, slaves look up, they see Pharaoh and they tremble. Slaves assume Pharaoh gets the final word. Slaves think the future belongs to the one with the most threatening whip.

But God is teaching these slaves what it means to live as sons, to look up and see more than Pharaoh's chariots, but to see the Lord of hosts, who is at the same time their liberating king and their affectionate father.

[31:40] He's teaching his sons to receive his word and walk in his ways, not by the crack of the whip as I did with my girls this past week, but with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with a gentle, patient, and loving posture toward his grumbly children.

See, the point of Exodus isn't simply liberation from slavery, but liberation for and unto sonship. The point of Exodus isn't simply, wow, Yahweh is a powerful God worth trusting, but Yahweh is also a loving father worth living with.

And man, I think that's what I was missing when I was Pharaoh to my daughters in my home this past week. living within the imagination of Pharaoh and his empire.

I thought being a good father meant controlling my daughters. I thought I needed to control them with force and pressure and more and more threatening cracks of the whip. But you know, on Friday, after like really just laying it into my girls before they hit it off to school, I went for my daily walk with my dog Sammy and with God and my heart sank and I had to fight back tears.

Why? Because I knew that the father I had been to my girls that morning was so far from the father I've been trying to point my girls to in these past eight years of being a dad.

[33:07] Our father in heaven. Hallowed be his name. Our holy and good, good father who is a father without equal. And it wasn't even just that I was treating my girls like my slaves, but man, at the same time that I was playing Pharaoh, I too was treating my own self as a slave.

A slave to Pharaoh's imagination, a slave to the idea that cracking the whip is the only way to win in this world. Sure, I was holding the whip, but I was acting way more like a slave than a son.

You know, in the Gospel of Luke, chapter nine, Jesus is up there on the mount of transfiguration. Transfiguration. And as he's praying, his face and his clothes all become bright and glorious, and then Moses appears with Elijah, and they start talking to Jesus about his departure, or in the Greek, his exodus.

And basically, they're talking about his cross, his sacrifice, or what Jesus calls his own baptism. The way he will put sin to death through his blood and triumph over death and evil by taking upon himself the deathly judgment threatening all God's children.

So, they're on this mountain, right? They're talking about how he will become the ultimate Passover lamb whose blood will cover and protect every child of God from judgment. But then Peter comes in, right?

[34:31] And he's like, Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us start building some shelters for you guys. And Luke tells us he did not know what he was saying. It's almost like all Peter could think to do was to try to make himself useful, to serve, try to build something, get something done, bring value, advance the ball a couple more yards for God.

And I wonder if that's how so many of us show up in the world. We wake up every day trying to advance the ball a couple more yards. And when we hit obstacles, we get more and more forceful. And to us, it just feels like resilience. It just feels like the natural way of the world. That's how you get stuff done, right? And sure, we want to be Christians who are diligent. But how often does our diligence actually turn into desperation and being incredibly demanding?

How often does our diligence come more from anxiety and insecurity and a slavish mindset than from the humble desire of a son to honor his father but within our God-given limits?

You know, when Peter seemingly goes into servant-slave mode, it's always stuck out to me what God says to him at the Mount of Transfiguration. He says, Peter, this is my son whom I love.

[35:53] With him, I am well pleased. Just listen to him. It's like God was telling Peter, Peter, my son, I didn't ask you to do anything other than fix your eyes on my son whom I love.

You see this? You see this brilliance? You see my delight in him? How pleased I am with him? This is the whole thing, Peter. The very thing he came to accomplish and offer.

Peter, you don't need to build something for the son. You need the son to accomplish something for you. Listen to him. Look at him. Love him. Lean on him. Because this son is about to accomplish the exodus that none of us could ever accomplish for ourselves.

At the first exodus, Israel stood between their old life of slavery and the seemingly only other option, the waters of death, until their mediator, Moses, with a mighty and outstretched arm, right, as if it was the very hand of God made a way, a way of salvation through the deathly waters into life and freedom through the sea.

And when Pharaoh's forces followed, they didn't survive the baptism of the Red Sea. There was no exodus for them because they had no mediator to follow by faith. But now, a greater mediator has come.

[37:13] And he's gone through a greater baptism all alone at first to accomplish a far greater exodus. Except this time, this mediator's hand seems far less mighty.

Instead of clutching a wooden staff, it's pierced through, outstretched and nailed to a cross of wood. And when this mediator is baptized in the judgment of God, he actually tastes death for you and for me to bear the judgment that every child of God but him has ever deserved for all the ways that we feared and followed the pharaohs of this world instead of our Father in heaven.

And it's not until the third day that he emerges from the waters of judgment, but emerge he does to guarantee resurrection life, new creation, to chart a new way in our broken world in which there often seems to be no good way, no good option, no good possible outcome.

This is what he does and this is the gospel. The gospel of Exodus, the gospel of new creation, the gospel of sonship for former slaves like you and me. Slaves to sin and death, slaves to the imagination of Pharaoh and slaves to fear and terror and insecurity.

Jesus, the greater Moses, Yahweh himself, the Messiah King has come in the flesh, not to crack the whip, but to bear the whip in our place to bring many sons to glory.

[38 : 38] So, if this is our God, why would we continue to live with limited imaginations determined by the empires of Pharaoh? Why would we continue to tremble before the chariots and keep living like no one can save us but ourselves when instead we can live in our Father's love and liberty and in the fullness and freedom won for us in Christ?

So, as we move on toward Moses' law, this, the gospel, it's so essential. The Ten Commandments aren't new restrictions for a newly enslaved people, but they are the way that liberated children of God live in harmony with their Father and with each other after the image of Christ.

So, let's live that way and trust Him. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, would you expand our imaginations to see the world as you see it, to know that with you and in you all things are possible and all things turn out for good for those who love Christ.

We thank you for our better mediator Christ, for His baptism, for His exodus, and that you have graciously invited us to join Him in that baptism, in that exodus.

God, let us set our eyes on Jesus and would He prove Himself to be the author and perfecter of our faith and would our lives demonstrate to the world all the possibilities that are in you and only in you.

[40 : 19] In your Son's name we pray. Amen.