

SUMMER 9 - The Hope of Glory

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Date: 30 January 2013

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[0 : 0 0] well friends let's pray father we thank you so much for your word we thank you for this book of exodus that we've been looking at for this month and we pray father that you'd help us understand it tonight and also to see your great purposes through your son as they are foreshadowed here and father we pray these things in jesus name amen well friends i wonder if any of you have seen the movie signs starring mel gibson it's a movie loosely based on i think the the crop circles are just there for decoration largely it's based around crop circles that have appeared at certain times around the world and in this movie the crop circles are made by aliens who are invading the earth and however the center of the movie i think is not the alien invasion at all like i said i think it's just props for the story the center is a character played by mel gibson and as the movie proceeds we find that gibson's character used to be an episcopal or if you like anglican clergyman hence you can see why i quite enjoyed listening to or watching this movie in a small regional town somewhere near philadelphia in the u.s however in the movie he has lost his faith because of a car accident in which his wife was killed and the story centers around uh this man grappling with his faith in the front you know as he grapples with his wife's death now as far as the story goes he and his brother and two children live on a farm and this farm grows corn and is one of the many localities around the world where crop circles begin to appear they're followed by spacecraft whose presence is made known through lights in the sky and the first appearance of those lights is in mexico and mel gibson and his family see them on television they're apprehensive if not scared and so late at night gibson and his brother merrill sit talking late into the night while the children sleep protective of their children and a merrill turns to his brother and says says to him give me some comfort and gibson thinks for a little while and then says the following to his brother people break down into two groups when they experience something lucky group number one sees this sees it as more than luck more than a coincidence they see it as a sign evidence that somewhere out there there is someone watching out for them group number two sees it as just pure luck a happy turn of chance i'm sure the people in group number two are working at those 14 lights are looking at those 14 lights in a very suspicious manner at this moment for them the situation is a 50 50 could be bad could be good but deep down they feel that whatever happens they are on their own yeah there are those people but there are a whole lot of people in group number one that see those 14 lights and they are looking at a miracle and deep down they feel that whatever is going to happen there'll be something there to help them and that fills them with hope so you've got to ask yourself this question what kind of person are you are you the kind that sees signs and sees miracles or do you believe that people just get lucky the conversation goes on for a little bit longer and meryl admits that he is from group number one and finally meryl turns to gibson remember the

ex-anglican clergyman and he says to him so which type are you and gibson dodges the question for a little while and tries to tell his brother it really doesn't matter which group you're in as long as you find comfort in what's being in the way you perceive it and what and in what he has said to him and then the camera records meryl remembering his wife's death and finally he turns to his brother and he utters these words there is no one meryl we are all on our own now friends let me tell you for those of us who have believed and for those who have believed there is nothing so crushing to the spirit than to come to the realization that god is not present that god is not there or that somehow god has withdrawn his presence and in some ways that is the situation that is being faced by israel in exodus 33 although they haven't stopped believing in one sense the covenant though has been broken and they know that god has withdrawn his presence and israel faces the absence of god and the prospect that god will not go with them that is that he will in one sense be permanently absent from them and that's what we saw on sunday now let me tell you what i intend to do tonight i want to return to exodus 33 and 34 for a little while and point out some things that i did not point out to you on sunday night the second i want to go and do some larger reflecting on the theological significance of what we've seen in these chapters and third i want to look at the importance of exodus in the bible as a whole because this is our last talk on exodus and finally i want to i want to help us think about one way in which exodus is applied in the new testament and therefore how it might apply to us that is you know what we might take home with us in terms of application so let's remember the context of these chapters the book of exodus told us that god promised an oath to abraham isaac and jacob to be their god and the god of their descendants god has honored that oath in exodus by rescuing his people out of egypt he has formally adopted them in a contractual and covenantal relationship in chapter 25 the people break that covenant sorry in chapter 25 the covenant chapter 24 the covenant is signed sealed and delivered if you like in chapter 32 so just a few chapters later the people break the covenant and break it dramatically since the covenant is broken god has every right to walk away from that relationship he could continue his oath to abraham isaac and jacob by continuing it through mooses which is what he offers to do mooses intervenes you might remember mooses pleads with god to change his mind to relent and remarkably god does he will fulfill his oath to the patriarchs by bringing this people into the promised land now with that in mind let's enter into chapter 33 and please have it open with me you see in chapter 33 we have not yet arrived at the point where god has declared them to be his people again that is he's not yet got to the stage where he said i am going to be present with you so even if even if they are his people although there's not been declared as yet he's not said that he's going to be with them we have got to the stage where he's willing to have the commandments written up again in other words the symbols of the covenant are going to be put back into place indicating the covenant is back on in one sense and so in that sense that they are his people again however god hasn't yet said anything definite and that's where exodus 34 verses 6 to 7 which we looked at come in as we saw on sunday in these verses god reveals his character to mooses his glory he tells mooses as it

were what makes him who he is and the clear word is that he's a god whose overwhelming desire is to forgive that is to have surprising mercy and love and kindness in other words when mooses pleaded with god he was pleading correctly he was urging god to follow his own disposition that is he was urging god to be god and the rest of this chapter the rest of the book shows god to be what he says he will be in these verses in exodus 34 6 to 7 he is he is in action the god he is in word which is what you expect of the real god so he restores his covenant despite israel's breach of it he forgives he acts with extraordinary surprising goodness and mercy he does what he's under no obligation to do in one sense because of israel's action but what i think he is under obligation to do by the disposition of his own character he does what i think he cannot help do forgive and love and so in exodus 35 the building of the tabernacle is begun and in exodus 40 we read some magnificent words so flip over to chapter 40 verses 34 to 38 and i want you to look at what is being said because it's so easy to just pass over these verses and not remember that background that i've just rehearsed with you remember the background remember the gross sin remember the idolatry remember what they did remember god saying you take your people and whom you brought up out of egypt not my people whom i brought out of egypt remember that background and then read these words 34 then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the lord filled the tabernacle and mooses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it and the glory of god filled the tabernacle and in all the travels of the israelites wherever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle they would set out but if the cloud did not lift they did not set out until the day it lifted so the cloud of the lord was over the tabernacle by day and fire was in the cloud by night in the sight of all the israelites during all their travels can you see why these verses are so magnificent here in the closing verses of this book with the background of so much sin we find god doing that unexpected and surprising given what israel had done in the relationship the expected thing could have been god leaving but he does the unexpected and the unmerited he acts in grace and mercy and he remains faithful that though they were faithless and he remains loving and gracious and kind and he accompanies them he goes with them in their midst by day and night he even gives them a physical reminder of this in the cloud and the fire it's a remarkable end to this book given that it's great sin now what i'd like to do is show you how what we've seen here flows through the rest of scripture i'd like you to turn with me to hosea chapter 11 so hosea 11 and i'm going to summarize what you see there um just to let you know um the the words that are used here in hosea 11 indicate uh there's a sort of a courtroom setting as it were and within that setting you have a protagonist a father or the product protagonists are a father god and a son the nation of israel and the court is told that the father has been a good father read through it and you'll see this uh you see he's been loving and kind but the son we are told has been rebellious and continually broken relationship with the father in verse 5 the punishment for this sin is announced israel will be led into exile in assyria

judgment will become upon the nation because of their sin and then in verse 8 god speaks again and god cries out in anguish and he asks how can i do this and he refers to two cities can you see them there admah and zeboiim which were overturned in god's judgment against sodom and gomorrah in genesis 19 god knows that his people have done as much if not more than these cities but god struggles in his own being and the hebrew word that is used for the destruction of sodom and gomorrah is used for what happens within the very within the inner being of god in other words god i think is pictured in one sense as turning his anger upon himself bearing what would have been exercised toward israel uh even within his own being that is i think he takes the pain and punishment for his people within his own being and verse 9 summarizes what happens as a result can you see it there he says i will not execute my fierce anger he says i'm not going to destroy my people for i am god the lord and exodus 34 told us what this god is like you see he's the lord the lord the gracious and compassionate god slow to anger and abounding and steadfast love and faithfulness keeping steadfast love for thousands and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin and what i want you to notice what is what has happened in this chapter for this chapter tells us or gives us a snapshot of how god can do what mooses asks him to do in exodus 32 you see to be truly just god must be serious about sin mustn't he he must deal with sin but to be truly loving god is pushed to find a way to forgive sin if possible and be reconciled to the ones that he loves and it cannot be accomplished by the humans involved because they are you know fundamentally sinful through and through therefore whatever happens what however this is to be done it must come from god himself it must be wrought by god himself for his love and his mercy to triumph over judgment something must happen to reconcile these two dispositions within god or these two facets of his existence and hosea tells us or gives us a glimpse as to how this might happen it tells us that he can allow mercy to triumph over judgment by turning his judgment upon himself now turn to romans 3 because this is where we see it happen so romans 3 21 to 26 which we read earlier on you see romans 3 tells us effectively how god manages to turn his judgment upon himself romans 1 to 3 told us what we know from israel and all humanity that is all humans are related to god and are obligated to serve love and serve him however romans 1 to 3 tells us that all humans have failed to fulfill their obligations there is none that is righteous and no not one says paul just immediately preceding these verses romans 3 21 sums it up says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of god but what paul then does is tell us that god acts in unexpected and unmerited grace that is he allows his son to become a human being and face his anger that is suffer death on behalf of god's people he allows jesus to be put forward as he says here as a propitiation by his death he effectively god effectively turns his anger upon himself and takes it into his own being as a demonstration of his own righteousness he allows mercy though in this very act of demonstrating his righteousness he allows mercy

to triumph over judgment he deals justly with sin and he allows the sinner to be justified and forgiven before god now friends can you see what's going on in exodus 32 to 34 in exodus 33 verse 12 moses seeks to know god's ways and in exodus 34 verses 6 to 7 god shows moses his ways or declares his ways he is the lord the lord the gracious and compassionate god slow to anger abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness keeping steadfast love for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin and you see so so what moses saw and experienced from the cleft of that rock was none other than that which would later be seen in all its glory on the cross where god would be the god who takes sin seriously but who is also the lord the lord the gracious and compassionate god slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love friends isn't this a god to stand in awe of who can be both things who can be just and the justifier and a god who would send his son in order that these things could be accomplished there is no other god in history who has done that who can manage that but ours has he has reconciled us to himself and we just get that little glimpse there in the exodus passage moses moses confronted god but touched in his character what he knew to be true and god responded and in the cross we see it fulfilled so friends there's much more that could be said about exodus uh... but i want to briefly turn to its importance within the bible as a whole as a way of wrapping up our series together you see the book of exodus is a grand book and not as a friend of mine who asked me who i asked to proofread it sort of said to me said exodus why are you doing that um... no no exodus is a grand book as we've seen it's a book of history it records uh... historical events uh... and that have formed the identity of the nation of israel even down to this day it is a book of law and a book of instruction it contains drama and story tradition and sociology it's got folk songs and hymns uh... it's a book that has formed the basis of western jurisprudence it underlies much of jewish and christian religious practice uh... we're introduced to tabernacles and priests and cult and the foundations of temple synagogue and even christian assembly are somewhat laid here our understanding of god is significantly enlarged as we see him in action as a deliverer a lawgiver a judge a confidant and not only this in the book of exodus we meet moses and pharaoh we meet the nation of israel where prior to this had been predominant we'd heard predominantly just about people like abraham isaac jacob and joseph uh... but now we see a whole nation of people exodus is the book where he gives that nation great and glorious gifts a special name a special deliverance special guidance special covenant special worship special mercy and the ideas and the people that we meet in the book of exodus are foundational for everything that follows the event of the exodus you see was celebrated in hymn and poetry uh... was made part of memory and story it was celebrated every year in feasts and in fasts it was inscribed into the memory and psyche of god's people throughout history and we've just taken eight meetings to skim the surface of the second half

[20 : 19] so we've seen god give the law ratify his covenant give mooses instructions we've seen horrific idolatry we've seen god forgive and renew his covenant and then gift them with his presence and i hope that like me you've learned great things as we've wandered through these chapters let me tell you we've only just skimmed the surface things though about god things about how to live with god things about yourself things about god's purpose in his world this is a great book and it is one of the most quoted books in the new testament only to be beaten by perhaps you might just have a little guess in your brain before i tell you only to be beaten by psalms and isaiah okay it's a great one jesus and the new testament authors often refer to the ideas and the character and the characters we find in the book of exodus and the use of those ideas and characters is very broad so what i thought we'd do tonight is we'd turn to a single passage in the new testament that has one of the most extended discussions of the ideas and characters that are here it's a great passage because it takes the story of the book of exodus and applies it to us as individuals and as a congregation it doesn't operate as a summary of the book of exodus but it gives us a guide as to how we might go about applying the book of exodus to our modern lives and on your way to it which is hebrews 3 and 4 i want you to have a look at psalm 95 so psalm 95 i'm just going to read a bit of psalm 95 to you it's a song of thanksgiving and yet it is also a song urging people to act in certain ways look at verse 3 for the lord is a great god and a great king above all gods in his hand are the depths of the earth and the mountain peaks belong to him the sea is his for he made it his hands form dry land you see the psalmist here did exactly what we've noticed that there's creation imagery sitting below the surface anyway and then he says come let us bow down and worship let us kneel before the lord our maker for he is our god and we are the people of his pasture the flock under his care today if only you would hear his voice do not harden your hearts as you did at meribah as you did on the day at massarah in the wilderness where your ancestors tested me and tried me though they had seen what i what i did that's chapters um uh 15 and a half through to 18 that's where that story occurs for 40 years i was so what happened there even their rebellion there so early after their crossing the red sea uh you know went on for 40 years for 40 years i was angry with that generation i said there are people whose hearts go astray they've not known my ways so i declared an oath in my anger they shall never enter my rest so there's the background to our passage we're now going to turn to hebrews chapter 3 and 4 let me read hebrews 3 1 to 6 for you therefore holy brothers and sisters who share in the heavenly calling fix your thoughts on jesus whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest he was faithful to the one who appointed him just as mooses was faithful in all his house in all god's house jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than mooses just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself for every house is built by someone but god is the builder of everything mooses was faithful as a servant in all god's house bearing witness to what would be spoken by god in the future but christ is faithful as a son over god's house and we are his house if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory can you hear all the echoes of exodus and christian faith being bound together

in the book of hebrews the writer spends a lot of time comparing jesus to old testament institutions or old testament people and his constant cry is that jesus surpasses everything and everyone who has went before him in this chapter he takes the figure of moises and compares him to jesus and the main point in verses 1 to 6 is that jesus is greater than moises in the same way that a builder of a house is greater than the house sorry is it and what he means is that moises was one of the people of god he was a good and faithful servant among the people of god but jesus was the son of god he was not as it were one of the people rather he was the creator of all things including the people of god so jesus he's saying is in a totally different league to moises far far greater than moises now let's have a look at now 3 7 to 19 the book of hebrews if you look at it as a whole is arranged around a number of key passages of scripture from the old testament and here the writer quotes one of those key passages psalm 95 and he makes the point that the story which began with the book of moises and carried on through leviticus and numbers can be applied to a whole host of people through history can you see what he's saying he's saying that story back there in exodus through psalm 95 can be applied to a whole host of people it applied you see to the original people or the point being made applied to the original people in exodus leviticus and numbers it applied to the people who sang psalm 95 together and it applied to people who read the original book of hebrews and by implication it applies to us so here is the book of exodus coming home to us one writer of the new testament telling us how this book of exodus comes home to us and if you want to hear the message in its briefest form it is this one short strong point do not harden your hearts so there's the take home message do not harden your hearts now as readers of the book of exodus we know what it is to harden your heart don't we because there's a very famous person in the book of exodus who does pharaoh you see pharaoh and the israelites harden their hearts they see or hear something about god they don't take it on board to see or hear something about god and passively not believe it or actively rebel against it is to harden your hearts and that's what pharaoh did and to some extent that's what israel did so in these last two weeks we've heard how the nation of israel turned to idolatry just after god had revealed himself to them and promised them his presence and here this world what we're told here is that this story is repeated again and again through israelite history it's repeated when the israelites arrive in the promised land although god had shown them to be his god himself to be their god although he dwelt among them though he'd cared for them and protected them though he'd provided them with everything they needed they did not trust him and he they showed their true colors they were hard of heart they were people whose whole disposition was to go astray in their hearts they were people who did not know god's ways and the point is a really potent one the ancient people of israel had been people who had seen one of the grandest events in recorded history the delivery of an entire nation out of slavery without a weapon being wielded a remarkable event then they had seen the glorious revelation of god on mount sinai and the giving of the law and they had watched his forgiveness and practical care for them in the wilderness but they still had no idea about what made him tick and what he was like

and how they should obey him and the end result was that god pronounced judgment on them they would not enter his rest and the point the writer is making is that while god is long-suffering and forgiving there is an end point that was true in the old testament with the ancient people of god and it's true for those for whom psalm 95 was written and it's true for those for whom the book of hebrews is written and it's true for us in the modern world who have exodus psalm 95 and hebrews to reiterate the point to us with that in mind turn to chapter 4 1 to 13 and what this writer does is develop that theme by concentrating on the idea of rest now when you read the old testament the idea of rest is a really rich one it's used to refer to god's gift of the promised land you enter into the promised land and you rest there and god gives you all his rich blessings you know so much so you know that uh you sort of sit under the fig tree and the figs fall into your mouth as it were and the grapes and so on and it's you know it's rest you you you are enjoying all the goodness of god in the land you know it's as though everything grows for itself you know and you just have to sit there and wait for it to happen at least if it you know if it were not for sin and so on and the writer of the hebrews uh makes the point a number of points about rest and uh first he says god's rest or he implies that god's rest was a much much greater idea than the promised land after all you see rest didn't come into existence in the promised land it's there from genesis 2 verse 2 so god's rest was something that existed long before the people of god entered into the promised land second thing he says is that rest must be greater than just the promised land because god still talks about rest after the promised land in psalm 95 god is still trying telling people to enter his rest in psalm 95 and also telling them as they read it in the first century and his argument reaches its pinnacle in verse 9 see it there where he says there remains then a sabbath rest for the people of god earlier today we have a midweek service here at holy trinity and we have evening prayer set at that service once a month and uh in evening prayer you're meant to say psalm 95 so psalm 95 then comes to us and urges us to enter god's rest and not to have our hearts hardened and so as we read it together today god was saying this still applies to you now do not harden your hearts work hard there remains a sabbath rest for the people of god and we'll we'll go on from there notice this verse there remains a rest to enter and this verse even this passage even tells you how to enter it you enter it by resting from your works as god rested from his in other words you enter god's rest by hearing and obeying god's gracious word about jesus christ by believing in jesus and his work for us trusting in his sacrifice to bring us to god and the work we are to do is to make every effort to accept christ's work on our behalf can you hear the the strangeness of that uh make every effort to enter rest okay look at verse 11 therefore let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience and this rest of being in god's presence and receiving god's gift starts now and continues through to eternity it is entered now by faith and it also remains but it also remains in the future the rest we have in christ is a rest prepared by god given by god and shared with god it's about

that's what the book of exodus was about wasn't it being that's what they celebrated in the end that god went with them that they were in his presence it's about living in the eternal presence of god seeing his face and enjoying his favour now can you see what's going on in chapters 3 and 4 the writer of hebrews thought that exodus and the story that followed leuiticus and numbers is for us first hebrews 4 12 makes clear that he saw psalm 95 and therefore the book of exodus being a word for us the old testament scriptures friends are a word from god living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword that that word of god exposes us before god the god with whom we have to do second the writer of hebrews appears to see a parallel between the exodus and christian experience in some way the story of israel and exodus corresponds to the story of god's people in christ as the israelites have experienced a great deliverance so have we who have come to know jesus as they have entered god's blessing and are yet on a journey to the promised land so we have already entered god's presence but are still on a journey as they are assaulted by dangers of faith so we are confronted by danger and threat with those similarities in mind let's see if we can summarize then what the author of hebrews wants to say to us and i've put it under two headings in your notes you see i think he wants to say something to us as both individuals and as a group of people let's have a look at individuals notice the thrust of hebrews 3 and 4 what's the point that sits behind it it's a point that sits behind every chapter in exodus as well the point is we are human we are human and the story of the bible is that humans are sinful that's why you have exodus 3 to tell us this is our nature and that everything that comes after that builds on that fact and understands that as a pre-statement we are sinful and that means we are inclined to do our own thing our own way without god that's what sinfulness means we're prone to forgetting how god's great greatness and god's grace and that is even true though we've seen the greatest thing that god can give that we have received the greatest grace that god has to give and it's even possible this is the incredible thing it is even possible for those who have seen and experienced god's great deliverance in christ to drift away from it at least that's what the rite of hebrews is intimating you see sin so easily deceives us it so easily hardens us against god it requires a daily choice a daily decision to follow christ every day every day we need to actively choose that we will share in christ and persevere being a christian does not exempt us from taking care to believe in god and to trust in jesus it is a daily hourly minute by minute decision constantly we are confronted with it we have heard god's word we have listened to his great promise we have seen what he has done for us in his son we have received his warning about what happens when people turn away and so we can respond in two ways today friends as you listen to the word of god read to you and explain to you you can respond in two ways you can turn away in unbelief and disobedience or you can that is you can choose

to be ignorant of what god has done and choose to have a sinful and hard heart or you can turn in faith sharing in christ and holding firm your confidence in him until the end that is a choice we individuals have to make it's not one we made 30 years ago and then put into our back pocket and drag out every now and then it's one we make every day the writer of hebrews captures it really well he says we have come to share in christ this is in chapter 3 i think verse 14 we've come to share in christ if we hold firm the beginning of our assurance firm until the end listen to it we have come to share in christ if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end you see the christian life is about continually choosing to believe that's one reason i suspect why you have the present continuous tense used of belief in the new testament particularly in john's gospel it is a it is an act of ongoing belief so friends you you can't just do it it's not just something you do once you do it every day you choose however it's not enough for each person to just take care for themselves not enough for each person to say today i'm going to choose jesus no we're to care for each other and hebrews says this very clearly we are to encourage each other until that last day you see sin so easily deceives us it so easily hardens us against god it requires this daily choice this daily decision every day we actively choose that we will share in christ and persevere together with each other being a christian does not exempt us from taking care to believe in god and trust in christ ourselves but friends please hear me at this point for in our highly individualized society we don't take the next step it also doesn't exempt us from taking care to encourage our brothers and sisters in christ to believe in god and holy trust in christ we must do this every day as well this is our daily task as we corporately hear the scriptures read and hear god's word as we listen to the great promises as we apprehend what's been done for us in christ as we receive warnings about what happens if we turn away we must turn to each other and we must urge each other don't don't turn away in unbelief and disobedience we must encourage each other not to have sinful hearts as individuals and as a congregation we have to goad each other to share in christ and to hold fast and to hold fast our confidence in him you see the things in in exodus were written for us and for our instruction they're not just written for personal edification and encouragement though they are personally edifying and encouraging they're directed to us today those words from exodus they are for us they're directed to us corporately so let's hear them together let us encourage each other while it is still called today lest any one of us be hardened by sin's deceitfulness that is let us help each other that we might enter his rest let's pray father we are so aware of the deceitfulness of sin in ourselves and also in others father we have seen it so so vividly in the book of exodus and yet what psalm 95 has told us is that the dangers

[40 : 29] that were faced by them then are still dangers for us so please help us to encourage each other even every day while it is still called today lest any one of us be hardened by sin's deceitfulness father we pray this in Jesus name Amen