Moses and the Israelites (PM)

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[0:00] So, we're in Exodus 14, 1-14. And this is not a three-point sermon. I'm just going to basically go through the story and make some observations.

And we're actually jumping into the middle of a really brilliant story. It's a story that is probably the best Old Testament picture of what salvation looks like.
The story of Exodus. So, at this point in our narrative, the Israelites who were slaves in Egypt have been set free by Pharaoh. So, that's awesome. They're heading to the promised land. And they think, this is great. We're out of Egypt.
Everything will be roses. But in verse 1, God says to Moses, take my people on a detour to a very particular spot. And I want you to set up your camp there for a while.
And the spot that God wanted them to go was unusual because it was in between the sea and the desert. So, strategically, it was a nightmare. You've probably watched these spy movies where the main character sits in a restaurant.
[1:03] And they always sit in a strategic spot in the restaurant. You know, opposite the front door so they can see who's coming in. And they know where all the exits are. That's smart. This was not, it didn't seem to be a smart move.

Militarily, they were in between a rock and a hard place. If they were attacked, they had nowhere to go. No retreat, no escape. And this is where God said to these recently escaped slaves, go right there.
It's perplexing. And it gets more perplexing because God says to Moses, I know that Pharaoh is going to go after these folks when he hears where they're camped. So, the right question to ask is, why would God do this?
Why would God say go to this spot that doesn't make any sense? And he explains himself in verse 4.
God says, I'm going to take out Pharaoh's army. And I'm going to show them that I am the Lord.
And sure enough, verse 5 says that Pharaoh regrets releasing all this cheap labor and sends his army to retrieve them.
[2:06] And you might have noticed the details in the passage, like the size of the army. 600 chariots. So, why the detail? These details are there to convey that the slaves were in an utterly hopeless position, really.

Now, I said at the start of the story that this is an amazing, like it's a visual aid helping us understand Jesus' work on the cross. And how does it do that? Well, God puts the Israelites in this utterly, like just a hopeless situation to show them that their deliverance is all God.
It is 100% God's doing. And you probably know how the story ends. They go after the Israelites. The sea parks. The Israelites go through.
And then the sea closes in on the Egyptian army, destroying the army completely. So, the Israelites were in a helpless situation. They couldn't help themselves.
They couldn't save themselves. God intervenes and completely destroys the enemy to save them.
So, how does this help us understand the cross? Well, most of you probably know, believe, that one of the, probably the significant theme of the cross is the idea of substitution.
[3:21] Right? That God, that Jesus substitutes himself on the cross for us. Taking on God's anger at sin on himself. But there's more going on.

It's not just that happening on the cross. There's more going on. The cross is not just about substitution. It's about God disarming and defending our great enemy.
And Hebrews talks about this. Hebrews 2, 14 to 15. It says that Jesus died to destroy the one who has the power of death. That is the devil.

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And deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. So, it's referencing the Exodus story there. So, the Exodus story is this great visual aid.
And it says this. God fights for us. God fights for us. And why does God fight for us? Because we are precious to him.
[4:20] God fights for us because we're precious to him. And we understand this idea. Don't we? I mean, we fight for people who are precious to us. I remember a few years ago, one of my kids was in a park.

And from a distance, I could see that some kids were being, other kids were being very mean to her. Like, knew what was happening from a distance. And I went over and I said, What is going on here?
That's right. I was fired up. And I said, Where are your parents? They pointed out their parents. And I stormed over to their parents. And then told them what I was thinking about the whole situation. And at the end of my rant, I remembered that I'm a Canadian now. So, I had to be a bit nicer. So, towards the end of it, I said, And perhaps this is a teachable moment for you and your children. We go into battle for those who are precious to us. And, you know, we're so precious to God that He sends His own Son into battle for us.
[5:28] So, on the cross, Jesus is not only our substitute, but He is disarming the devil. And what do I mean by that?

What does that mean? It means no longer can the devil say anything to you that can stick. Like, He can't say anything to you that sticks.
He can't say to you, You should be ashamed of yourself. You are... I see you. I know. I know your thoughts. I know what you've been up to.
I know your history. You're grubby. You don't deserve to be with me. The devil can't say anything like that to you.
Because Jesus took our shame on the cross. We go to heaven. We get to be with Christ for eternity on His moral record, not ours.
[6:26] So, the devil has no accusation that he can level against you. He's been disarmed. All His weapons, a primary one being shame, is totally disarmed.

He no longer has that weapon. He will try and wield it. But it has no power over you anymore. He's a defeated enemy. Let's move on.
We got a little bit ahead of ourselves here, but let's move on. So, the people of God, all those years ago, they're trapped between the sea and the desert. There is no escape. They are not trusting God will fight for them.
They're mostly freaking out. And they say to Moses, because they hear the armies coming, they say to Moses, why did you bring us here? Did you bring us here because there weren't enough graves in Egypt for us? So, you just wanted to kill us here. Did they run out of graves so we could die?
We should have stayed in Egypt. We should have just stayed there, which is just so telling, isn't it? They escaped slavery. And the first sign of trouble, what's their first inclination? Is to run back to Egypt.
[7:25] In their minds, returning to slavery was the easier option. It was easier to return to slavery than it was to trust in the Lord. Which is a great lesson for us.

You know, we find ourselves in these really difficult places in life. And we can be tempted to chuck in our faith. Or we can be tempted to at least really compromise. The Israelites could not imagine a scenario where God was going to take care of them in a really difficult situation.
They had no imagination for a Lord that actually had their interests at heart. They had no imagination for a God who would meet them in their needs. Can you imagine that?
Can you imagine that? In your situations in life, do you have an imagination for a Lord that would meet you in your situation?
Not necessarily make it go away, but walk with you in it. There is a bigger picture going on that God is aware of. And we are not.
[8:30] In this situation, God had a plan. He was rolling it out. And the people just couldn't imagine that. We need to remind ourselves that we don't see or know everything that God sees or knows.

You know, why is my life not as I imagine it should be? Does God know what He is doing? Is it possible? Is it possible for you to think this?

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Is it possible for you to think in your situation, God is still on the throne of the universe and He knows what He's doing? So our story says, yes, that He is.
And it's a hard lesson to learn. And He paints it with very bright colors for the Israelites, for us to remember and know forever. God navigated these people into a place of total weakness, of complete weakness.
Orchestrated a place of complete weakness. Why? So He could show them that He was their strength. The people of God in our story aren't there yet.
[9:38] They're just kind of baffled and fearful. So how does God respond to these Israelites? They're all sort of being really grumbly. It's just wonderful. Verse 13.

And Moses said to the people, fear not, stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.
The Lord will fight for you and you only have to be silent. Isn't that brilliant? That's their job. Their job in this place is this.
He says, all you have to do is just be silent right now. The victory over the enemy in this story is entirely on God.
All they had to do was watch. God loves His people. He loves His people. He won't let them get repossessed by these slaveholders. In John 10, it says very much the same thing.
[10:43] Jesus says this in John 10, 27 to 30. My sheep hear my voice. I know them. They follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

My Father who has given them to me is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. The Lord will not let that happen to you.
Again, the story of Exodus. It is this wonderful visual aid helping us understand the cross. When it comes to salvation, stand still. Be silent. God has done it all.
There is nothing you can add to the cross. And this is the genius of Christianity. Every other faith, it's like you're building a bridge over a gully. You sort of have to build a pylon and build a little bit more and build another pylon and just build a little bit more, build another pylon and try, keep trying, trying to get to the other side.
No, Christian salvation is something you receive and accept from a God who went into battle for you against your enemies and thoroughly defeated them.
[11:49] It's a complete salvation. I mean, this whole story here that we've read today in Exodus 14, it just says grace, grace, grace, grace, grace. And as a side note here, grace is hard for us, I think, because we want to be powerful.

There's nothing wrong with being powerful. There's nothing wrong with being strong. But we want to be strong in a way which makes us look good, right? And not in a way that makes or reflects well on God.
So when God says, just stand there and be silent, I have your salvation, I will save you, it's hard for us because we want to own a little bit of that victory. We want to own a bit of our salvation by being extra good or something like that.
We want to be able to say, we did good and that's why God accepts us. I'm one of the nice guys and that's why God accepts me. No, it's just grace. Let me close up. Very quickly here.
God fights for us. That's what's happening on the cross. God is fighting for us because we are precious to him.
[12:54] Christ fought on the cross, defeating and disarming the devil. There is no accusation leveled at you that can stick. Trust God in this.

Now, if you are here and you are battling shame, if there is sin from years ago in your life that pops into your brain and it makes you feel terrible, folks, you need the Holy Spirit to speak to you.
You should get prayer. After a service tonight, Lorna, you'll be, yeah, Lorna and Mark will be with you. Lorna and Mark will be at the back of the church over here. And they would love to pray with you.
If you're in a baffling situation in life and you're struggling to trust God, you're struggling to know that he has the big picture, he sees things that you don't, ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart.
If you say this in your prayer life, God, I just don't trust you with my future, ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you tonight in prayer. Amen.
[14:01] Amen.

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