

The Mindful God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 January 2017

Preacher: Dave Nannery

[0 : 00] Okay, not everybody, well too bad, man. You know, some of you may be like, okay, which Robin Hood are we talking about? There's been a lot of movies made about Robin Hood.

This is the one with the cartoon fox, who robs from the rich to give to the poor cartoon rabbits that he doesn't eat. For some reason, he gives them money instead of eating them. That would be an interesting alternate ending to the story, if that's where we went with it.

Movie, I mean, it's got a lot of really weird stuff in it. It's got a pair of cross-dressing fortune tellers. It's got a fat British chicken lady who's defeating, you know, a dozen rhinoceroses in the game of American football.

You know, it's just got all this stuff, cinema at its finest. The low point of that movie takes place when Prince John, the good-for-nothing Prince John, has thrown pretty much the entire town of Nottingham in debtor's prison.

And so the movie, you know, it scans across all these, you know, sad and dejected animals who are, like, feeding each other crumbs and barely surviving in prison as the rooster narrator sings sort of an iconic song, Not in Nottingham.

[1 : 12] Now, those of you who raise your hands probably remember this song pretty well. It seems to just sort of worm its way into our heads. I have a friend of mine, she, back when her oldest son was, you know, two, three years old.

You know how kids fixate on songs sometimes and they just get, you know, let it go or whatever. They get a song in their heads and they want to play it over and over and over. Her son got this song in his head, Not in Nottingham, and she had to play it for him like 50 times a day.

Probably the most depressing household in the world at the time. Because the lyrics go like this, Every town has its ups and downs. Sometimes ups outnumber the downs, but not in Nottingham.

I'm inclined to believe if we weren't so down, we'd up and leave. We'd up and fly if we had wings for flying. Can't you see the tears we're crying? Can't there be some happiness for me?

Not in Nottingham. It is super sad, you know, as you're seeing this, you know. So that is sort of just this low point of the movie where there just doesn't seem to be any hope.

[2 : 23] People are just absolutely crushed by the despair, by the sadness they're feeling. They're feeling like there is no happiness here. Can't there be some happiness for me? None.

There is none. They have the strong sense that this is not the good life. And that the good life is something that is unattainable. That they have no hope of achieving for themselves.

And they're completely right. We're only two chapters into the book of Exodus. And what we are about to reach is we're about to arrive at our not in Nottingham moment.

The people of Israel, they've been enslaved under the government of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Pharaoh is the most powerful man in the world. His government is the most powerful in the world.

These Hebrews, they are suffering. They are dying at a tremendous rate under Pharaoh's program of slavery and forced labor. Under Pharaoh's attempts of population control by killing off young Israelite boys.

[3 : 22] And all of them are suffering tremendously except for one man. One particular man named Moses. Now, we learned last week how Moses was adopted as a child by Pharaoh's daughter herself.

And he was raised in her household. He was raised as an Egyptian prince. But things are about to take a terrible turn for the worse for Moses. So turn in your Bibles with me to Exodus chapter 2.

Exodus chapter 2 verses 11 through 25. Now, if you're reading from one of the Bibles that our ushers handed out earlier in the service, you'll find this on page 45.

Page 45, Exodus chapter 2 verses 11 through 25. So let me read this and follow along in your Bibles. One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens.

And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together.

[4 : 40] And he said to the man in the wrong, why do you strike your companion? He answered, who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?

Then Moses was afraid and thought, surely the thing is known. When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian.

And he sat down by a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. The shepherds came and drove them away. But Moses stood up and saved them and watered their flock. When they came home to their father, Ruel, he said, how is it that you have come home so soon today? They said, an Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock.

He said to his daughters, then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread. And Moses was content to dwell with the man.

[5 : 50] And he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom. For he said, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.

During those many days, the king of Egypt died. And the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.

And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel, and God knew.

This is the word of the Lord. Now let's go back to the beginning here. Let's go back to verse 11. And what we're going to find is, after Moses' birth, after several years after his birth, he's been given to the daughter of the Egyptian king, the daughter of Pharaoh.

And now we see in verse 11 that we've skipped forward in time. Moses is now an adult. And we're going to, in fact, find out later what we've done, is we've actually skipped till when he's 40 years old.

[6 : 57] So Moses is now, at this point, around 40 years old, and this is when his whole life falls apart. This is when everything falls apart for him. Moses has been raised as an Egyptian.

He's been given the finest education, the finest training, the finest nutrition the ancient world has to offer. He is in the 1%. But Moses knows that he comes from a Hebrew family.

He knows his ancestry. He knows his people. And in verse 11, we find that Moses has decided to go out to where his fellow Israelites are working. He's going out to look on their burdens.

Now, maybe, we don't quite know. Maybe he's spent the first 40 years of his life sort of, you know, in a bubble, maybe. Maybe he's been isolated, shielded from this evil and this injustice.

Maybe now he wants to see for himself how his people, his brothers, are being treated. Or maybe he has known, and just now his conscience is just really starting to wake up. And Moses is looking out at this suffering, and he is horrified.

[8 : 02] And he's especially horrified to see an Egyptian overseer who is severely beating a Hebrew slave. And so Moses, this is just who the guy is.

We're going to find this out here. Moses is the kind of guy that he cannot just stand by and watch. Moses decides he is going to take justice into his own hands. He is going to bring justice to this situation.

And so Moses attacks the Egyptian, he kills him, and he buries his body in the sand. Moses is so angry, he is so zealous for his people, that he straight up murders an Egyptian man.

Moses really seems to be letting this judge, jury, executioner thing get to his head. You know, maybe he's kind of like this superhero, right? He's going outside of the law to bring justice to the people. This Robin Hood kind of guy.

Because the very next day, verse 13, Moses decides, you know what, he's going to continue his campaign of justice in whatever ways he can. He decides he's going to intervene in a fight between two Hebrew men.

[9 : 09] He's going to play the role of this noble and benevolent mediator for his people. You know, why are you, why do you strike your companion? You know, we're on the same side here.

It doesn't quite work out the way Moses expects. They don't exactly welcome his interference. One of the men calls him out on this in verse 14. Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian? You know, if you ever want to just absolutely shut up somebody who has a holier-than-thou attitude, just tell them that you know they murdered a guy.

That'll shut him up real good. You'll win that argument any day of the week, right? Assuming it's true. In this case, it is. Because what's happening here is that Moses identifies with his fellow Israelites.

Moses wants to help his people. Moses wants to do something to give them that good life that he has enjoyed. But they don't identify with him.

[10:21] They are not interested in the condescending charity of an Egyptian prince. Moses' efforts to help his people end in rejection. Now that is something perhaps that you and I can relate to.

Have you ever been in a situation where you just wanted to help? Maybe it was someone who had a need financially or otherwise.

Maybe it was someone who was just doing some self-destructive things or doing some things that you knew were bad or were harmful. And you were trying to step in. You tried to correct them as gently as possible.

You had the best intentions, best motives in mind. Only to be misunderstood. Only to have your motives questioned.

Have you ever tried to improve your own life or improve the lives of the ones you love only to be rejected by them? That's a story that's common to most of us. Our hope for the good life is crushed by human rejection.

[11:26] Our hope for the good life is crushed by human rejection. A lot of times we want what is best for ourselves. We want what is best for other people. But instead of being understood, instead of being accepted, we are attacked and we are rejected by them.

That's an experience that's common to many of us. And in Moses' case, he is naturally afraid of what's going to happen to him. Because his act of vengeance, his act of vigilante justice, is no longer secret.

In verse 14, he says to himself, surely the thing is known. And sure enough, the news makes its way up to Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Pharaoh now discovers that one of his own noblemen, a prince that is born in his own family, has turned against the people of Egypt and has sided with these Hebrews, whom Pharaoh is afraid are going to take over the land of Egypt.

Not even Moses' royal position is enough to protect him. The king of Egypt wants him dead. So Moses takes, you know, he takes that first train out of Egypt. He escapes into the Arabian desert to the east.

[12:44] He escapes into a region of the desert that's occupied by nomads, by the people of Midian. Moses runs away from civilization, goes out into the wilderness.

And there, Moses is going to live in exile for the next 40 years. Moses has lost everything. All of his success, all of his influence, all of his wealth, his acceptance, his family, his people, his home. His life is functionally over. He is utterly ruined. A man with no future, no hope. Moses is a failure. Maybe this is an experience you have lived too.

Because our hope for the good life is not only crushed by human rejection, it is crushed by human failure as well. It is crushed by human failure.

Because despite your best efforts, despite your best intentions, despite your best laid plans, maybe things have gone horribly wrong. Either you screwed up, or maybe like Moses, you found out that you never had a chance in the first place.

[14:08] Either way, you didn't have what it takes. You realize you don't have what it takes to be successful. In the eyes of your friends, in the eyes of your family, in the eyes of your community. Maybe you've lost your job.

Maybe you've lost your reputation. Maybe you've lost your savings. Maybe you've lost your home. Maybe you think you've lost out on the good life.

And that there is no hope for you. In Moses' case, he may be a homeless wanderer in a foreign desert. But at least he's got one thing going for him.

He's in the middle of desert, but he's found some water. That's a good thing. You know, he's lost a lot of stuff, but at least he has something to drink. In verse 15, we see that he comes across a well. He sits down there. And while Moses is there, funny thing happens. A bunch of young women show up. They arrive with a flock of sheep.

[15:10] It's probably pretty early in the morning. It's, you know, they want to go out there when it's still cool out, right, and water their flocks. And these young women, it turns out, they are the daughter of a significant individual among the people of Midian.

A religious leader, a priest, who is here named Ruel. And we don't know if it's a name or a title. He's also called Jethro later. This is a guy who has some power, and he's got at least seven daughters we see here.

These daughters are about to water, they're about to water these flocks when several tough guy shepherds show up. Real rough around the edges.

They don't, not really strong in the social graces. And they show up, and they basically shove the women aside. So they can get their water for their own sheep first, and then just head out for the day.

And so basically, the women are getting pushed to the side and sidelined. And, you know, who knows? This is probably, this may have been a common occurrence. There are some suggestions that, based on their father's reaction, that this was actually pretty normal.

[16:16] That these women are used to being, that these women are commonly mistreated by these shepherds. That they have to wait until the shepherds are gone. Wait till later in the morning when the sun is just beating down on them and their sheep before they can water their flocks.

Not today. Because what we have here is Mr. Superhero, Mr. Robin Hood, Moses himself. He is sitting by the well, and he is watching these aggressive jerks pushing around the young women. And here's where we're going to see Moses' character come out again. Because this guy cannot sit by the sidelines and do nothing. He is not that kind of guy. Whenever Moses sees injustice, Moses always has to step up.

Moses always has to do something about it. And so Moses stands up. Moses gets in these tough guys' face. And he tells them, you know, get back in line. Get back in line.

And they do. So the guy must have been pretty intimidating because they clearly outnumber him.

And yet somehow he puts them in their place. And then Moses proceeds to water the women's flock for them too.

[17:19] So he not only gets them back to the front of the line, but he says, you know what? I'm going to water all your sheep for you. And I'm going to do all that work for you. And apparently he does it pretty quick. Because they head home and their father is very surprised to see them back so early.

He's not used to them being able to make it back home so soon. And of course, you know, there's probably some pretty young women. Just think of all the teenage girls, you know, what are they doing?

They're just like, you know, running over with these amazing stories of just can't stop talking.

There's seven sisters. You know, no doubt their dad is like, what is going on?

And here's their story that he eventually gets out of them in verse 19. An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock. Absolutely love their father's response in verse 20.

Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him that he may eat bread. So they were so excited, they just ran off, ran back home. And their dad is like, wake up.

[18:24] You just left him there? Go back and get him. You know, this is a guy who's done a lot of good for us. You know, let's invite him. Let's show him some hospitality.

Well, long story short, Moses gets invited in and this Ruel guy, he really takes a liking to Moses.

And Moses accepts the fact, he doesn't have anywhere better to go.

He doesn't have anything better to do with his life. He has no future anywhere else. So Moses just kind of stays with the guy and pretty soon he's helping out with the family business as a shepherd and then he gets married to Ruel's oldest daughter, Zipporah, and then Moses, he just more or less settles for a life in the desert among the nomads of Midian.

He just kind of eases into this life. His wife gives birth to a son. Moses names his firstborn son Gershom.

That sounds like the Hebrew word for sojourner or foreigner. And he explains in verse 22, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.

[19 : 39] Moses is a resident alien in a land that isn't his own among a people that isn't his own.

He's an outsider. And the truth is, Moses, he wasn't really at home in the land of Egypt either. And he obviously wasn't at home and accepted among the Israelite people.

Moses has lived his whole life. As an outsider, never fitting in. His whole life, he has been a man without a country. And for many of us, our hope for the good life, it's not only crushed by human rejection and human failure, but by alienation as well.

Our hope for the good life is often crushed by alienation. have you ever felt like you don't belong? Like you don't belong among your family.

You don't belong in your school. You don't belong at your workplace. You feel like you don't fit in. You're an outsider. Now some of us feel this absolutely acutely.

[20 : 51] It's overwhelming. And there's no escape from it. This sense of isolation, this sense of alienation. And for those of us who are Christians, we understand that we're supposed to feel that way to some extent.

we don't fit in in the world around us. We don't value what they value. We don't believe what they believe. We don't live our lives the way they do.

As you and I might read in Hebrews chapter 11, we are strangers and exiles on earth. This world is not our home. This world as it now is is not our home because we are citizens of a better country, a heavenly one.

The more you and I imitate Jesus Christ, the more we become like him and love what he loves, the more acute our sense of alienation will grow.

Jesus himself said, you know, foxes have their holes and birds have their nests but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. So our hope for the good life is crushed by human rejection, human failure, and alienation.

[22 : 03] And it's in the ruins of hope that Moses spends the next 40 years of his life.

40 years like this until Moses is an old man whose dreams of a better future have died long ago. The commentator Douglas Stewart writes about him.

He was a failure as a deliverer of his people, a failure as a citizen of Egypt, unwelcome among either of the nations he might have called his own, a wanted man, a now permanent resident of an obscure place, alone and far from his origins, and among people of a different religion.

His character, as we have seen, was clearly that of a deliverer. His circumstances, however, offered no support for any calling appropriate to that character. It would surely require an amazing supernatural action of a sovereign God for this washed up exile to play any role in Israel's future. Moses knew this, and his statement, I have become an alien in a foreign land, resignedly confirms it. This is like that movie Robin Hood, except that Robin Hood has now been sent out in exile and has no hope and no future.

[23 : 29] And all the people in Nottingham are going to rot in that desert prison. An amazing supernatural action of a sovereign God. That's the only hope Moses had.

It's the only hope that the people of Israel have. Neither of them can save themselves. Moses can't do it. Israel can't do it. But what we find in verse 23 is that there is still hope left because the people of Israel are still crying out to the one who can save them.

Verse 23, we read this. During those many days, the king of Egypt died. And the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help.

Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning. And God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel. And God knew. The God who seemed so absent from the story is now about to take center stage. God hears.

[24 : 40] God remembers. God sees. God knows. God hears the groaning prayers of the Israelites. God remembers.

He holds in mind the covenant that he made with their ancestor, Abraham. This covenant when God told him in Genesis chapter 15, know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there and they will be afflicted for 400 years.

But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. God is going to bring them out of this land and he's going to bring them into a

promised land. Hebrews chapter 11 talks about Moses and says that he does not count, you know, he did not value all the treasures of Egypt because he was looking for something better. He knew what he had wasn't really the good life. The people of Israel are yearning for what truly is the good life. They're yearning for that promised land where they can dwell, where they can live the Lord with them.

God sees the helplessness of the people he loves and God knows. He is mindful of them. His people are close to his heart.

[26 : 02] And soon we're going to see that everything that has happened to Moses, it's not just bad luck, a roll of the dice. It's not just cruel fate.

All that's happened is the work of God himself. All that's happened to Moses is the work of God himself who is preparing a savior to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt just as he promised 400 years earlier.

here. This story isn't, it's not just written for the nation of Israel thousands of years ago, it's written for you and me today. It's written so that we would understand that this is the way that God works throughout history.

We see that this is the way he works throughout the pages of scripture. God is mindful of his people. God knows that our rejection, humankind's rejection of him, our rebellion against him, our sin against him, it has brought great pain, great suffering, great shame into our lives both because of the sins that we have committed and because of the sins that people have committed against us. God knows that we ourselves have been slaves to spiritual powers that ensure we remain trapped in thoughts, in habits that have been corrupted by sin. God knows that we are enslaved by our own tendencies within ourselves to turn away from him, to become self-reliance, reliant.

[27 : 29] Our hope for the good life is crushed by human rejection, failure, and alienation. But our God is mindful of our need for a savior.

Our God is mindful of our need for a savior. There's another commentator on the book of Exodus who writes this. He says, Moses foreshadows both the redeemer and the redeemed.

He first experienced Israel's rejection and became an outcast and alien before he himself became worthy to be her redeemer. Christ, too, became like us before he could deliver us.

But he did not simply descend from the comfort and prestige of an Egyptian palace, but from heaven itself, becoming not only a man, but a despised man for our sake.

As Moses became Israel's savior by truly embodying her suffering, Christ from highest heaven took onto his own body the sin of humanity. He is the savior through suffering.

[28 : 36] You see, Moses' story is not meant to be read in isolation from everything else in scripture. Moses is going to be the first of many saviors that God appoints for his people Israel throughout their history.

This line of saviors is one day going to culminate in the one true savior with a capital S. The savior of Israel, the savior of the world, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

Because Jesus is God himself. And in eternity, he has always been God. This morning before the service, we talked in the journey class about how God has existed in eternity as one God but three persons.

the father, the son, the holy spirit who are all fully God and equally God. God the son has always been God. But in history, he chose also to become a man.

100% God, 100% man. A human being like you and me. Jesus Christ. later on in scripture, you'll find that Jesus is going to endure all the shame, the humiliation, the suffering that the enemies of God can heap on him.

[29 : 54] Jesus is going to be rejected by the Roman government. He's going to be rejected by the leaders of his own people. He's going to be rejected by his closest friends. He's even going to be mocked and ridiculed by the criminals who are crucified with him.

Naked and on public display. Jesus is going to be laughed at as he hangs on a cross dying as an obvious failure.

Jesus is going to suffer alienation not only from human beings but from God the Father. Bearing, enduring, suffering God's wrath, his right anger against sin.

Doing it in your place and in mine. And it's because of Jesus, because of his obedience to his Father's will, that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ receives new life in his name.

everyone who is united with Jesus by faith has a new hope. Great expectations that we will be raised to life in the land that is promised to us.

[31 : 16] The new heavens and the new earth that are going to replace the world as it is now. And even now, we have a down payment of this eternal life.

we have God the Holy Spirit in us, among us, with us. We have a taste of the good life that is yet to come.

So what this means is that you and I can endure suffering. we can endure suffering just as the people of Israel did, just as Moses did, just as Jesus Christ our Lord did.

We can continue praying to our God for endurance through suffering and rescue from it. And we can know that our mindful God hears us, that God remembers his covenant with us, that he sees us, that he knows us in what we are experiencing.

And he knows because God the Son is a human being who has gone through it all. And he gets it.

[32 : 35] He understands our weakness. our hope for the good life is crushed by human rejection, failure, and alienation, but our God is mindful of our need for a Savior.

Let me pray. Let me pray.