



[3]SAPLING

God vs Pharaoh

Sermon - Melville Junction

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(1)

In Egypt – the family become a nation (70 - 600,000), in **slavery**.
Egypt comes to represent a system of Godlessness

(2)

The people **cry out** to God.
They remember the God of their forefathers.
They turn away from the system of Egypt and turn to God.

(3)

God sends a **saviour**, not some young handsome hero with a sword but an 80 year old man with a staff and faltering lips as well as his 83 year old side kick...
Not quite Batman and Robin

(4)

God defeats the system of slavery: (Snake swallows snake)
Blood – Hapi (Nile God)
Frogs – goddess of birth with a frogs head
Gnats – Set god of desert
Flies – Uatchit (represented by a fly)
Livestock – Hathor (cows head)
Boils – Sekhmet (power over disease)
etc

(5)

People choose to identify themselves
Passover lamb – blood on the door post to identify themselves as the people of God

(6)

Egypt wants you back
Pharaoh continues to go back on his promise...
After letting the people go he pursues them...

Exodus 5... ²² Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? ²³ Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."

Exodus 6 1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country." ² God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. ⁴ I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. ⁵ Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant."

⁶ "Therefore, say to the Israelites: "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment." ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. ⁸ And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD."

⁹ Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.

¹⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹¹ "Go, tell Pharaoh King of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country."

¹² But Moses said to the LORD, "If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?"

1. In slavery

- Imagine being a Hebrew person living in the time of this story, **let's be Yusuf.**
- Now Yusuf has **heard stories about how his family** came to be in Egypt.
- About Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph – how **Joseph was once the 2nd most powerful person in the land of Egypt.**
- He has heard **legend about a God** of his forefathers that through Joseph saved the entire known world from famine.
- Up until fairly recent, life has been good in Egypt, this family of **70 people** has prospered and multiplied and are now **600,000 people** living in an area called **Goshen in Egypt.**
- Things have changed under the **new Pharaoh** though – where there **was freedom there is now chains.**
- **He is a slave** and has been made to work hard, his people are being beaten, driven and killed.
- The **baby boys** are being rounded up and thrown into the Nile.
- **He is trapped, bruised...tired and hungry and he fears for the life of his children.**
- In the stories the Yusuf has heard about his forefathers and there God it is a story about a **land that has been promised to them.**
- **A land in which they can be free...**
- His people **once lived in this land** but now they find themselves in Egypt.
- **Egypt** has come to represent a **system of bondage/slavery throughout the bible**, a system of the world that is about **power, wealth, pride and godlessness.**
- It is a system that is **self sufficient with no need for God...**but it was not always this way.
- **It is life today**, the system of this world that we find ourselves in that enslave us, **wealth, selfishness, pride, fame, glory and power...**the systems that we set up so that we don't need to rely on God.
- **Today in our country we can still be enslaved** by these things even though we are "free".
- We can be so trapped by these systems that it is difficult **to see or understand what God is doing**, God becomes a **distant memory** a story that is passed around by some of us.
- Is it not amazing how so **much has changed since this time in Egypt** but slavery to a godless system seems to remain...
- **Are you feeling trapped, enslaved by your life style, your choices your debt?**

2. They Cry out...

- One day this burden **just becomes too much for Yusuf**, he cannot do this anymore.
- They **cannot do this by themselves** anymore; they cannot get out of this system by themselves.

- **Egypt is too powerful** and he has been **driven so hard** that they do not have any more energy to try and leave.
- **Yusuf and the Hebrews remember this God**...the God of their forefathers and they turn to God...
- They cry out to God...**they turn away from Egypt** that was once good to them and they seek God.
- God rescue us, **save your people...we are dying here we need you God.**
- **Yusuf lies awake some nights** and wonders whether this God has heard their cries, does He exist or is He legend...**does He care.**
- **(But God has heard, he is making a way possible through a man in a distant land.)**
- **We have all been in that place**, we are **drowning**...working too hard, our family life is stressed, our debts choke us, nobody recognises your hard work...you don't get the promotion, your work load increases and your salary seems to decrease.
- **The bank owns you**; your income does not quite cover your debt.
- **How did you get here?** ...this type of life was once good to you.
- What is the purpose, how **do you get out of this**...is it possible or is **this just your lot in life.**
- At some point **we cry out**, I have cried out to God before...literally on my knees face up to the sky and said God help me...save me.
- **Just that mere act of crying out** brings relief...it brings **hope** it makes me remember that this is not our lot in life.
- God **has made promises of a land**...a land that is available now to us.
- A place **where we can walk freely**, worship God and **bring life** to those around us.
- **When I cry out...does God hear my cry?**

3. God sends a saviour.

- **Yusuf is at the end of his strength**, he is skin and bones – a man of 40 but he looks 60.
- **He is destined to die here under this yoke of oppression.**
- But he **starts to hear whispers of a man**...a man sent by God (I AM) the God of his forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- Can it be – he **imagines a warrior** with a sword and a chariot...a great military leader.
- **He has a bit of hope and decides to go and listen to this man to** see if there is a small chance that they can be saved.
- He pushes his way **through the crowd** so that he can look at this man.
- Imagine how his heart must have dropped...**before him is no warrior.**
- It is an **80 year old man with a shepherd's stick** and his side-kick who is 83.
- He speaks with **faltering lips**...this is no hero.
- It's not exactly **Batman and Robin** now is it.
- **Is God mocking them, toying with their emotions?**

- **How does this old guy plan to set them free from the most powerful nation on earth?**
 - **With his stick or his faltering speech** – oh he is going to **go and talk to Pharaoh** is he.
 - **Good luck with that...**let me know how it turns out.
 - **Moses performs some signs before Yusuf** - with his staff and Yusuf starts to **hope**.
 - **Maybe just maybe God has sent this man.**
 - Moses and Aaron go to speak to Pharaoh and things **turn out worse**.
 - **Yusuf thought he was suffering before...**but now things have just got worse the slave masters have increased their work load and are now driving them harder than ever.
 - He might be thinking that **Egypt and their gods are too powerful for our God?**
 - **We were better off before** we got help.
 - If we look at **Jesus**, he also came to save us but **he was a carpenter**.
 - He was not a soldier; he **was gentle, caring and full of love and compassion**.
 - He **did not take up arms**, to inflict harm on the oppressor.
 - **He brought life and healing**.
 - **He came to save humanity** from the prince of darkness, powers and principalities (**evil**).
 - But **he seemed like an unlikely candidate** (the people of his day had difficulty believing).
 - The **people who followed** him, who put their faith in him **often suffered more** as a result.
 - The load increased, the system of sin started increasing the burden/pressure.
 - Don't you find that in your life, **following Jesus often makes life difficult...I sometimes look around and wonder what life would look like if I was not a Christian – if I had not cried out to God one day, would I have been better off if He had not responded**.
 - But **those times are few**, because this **life of freedom** that has been offered to me and to us is **so much more whole** and life giving than the alternative.
4. **God defeats the system of slavery (God Kicks butt)**
- **Yusuf's nostrils are full of sand** and grit; his muscles are aching as are the wounds on his back from the whips.
 - He is going to die here in this hole; he **hears whispers that Moses is going back to pharaoh to demand that they be set free...**how is this going to turn out.
 - **It is no use, Egypt is the most powerful nation on earth they have armies, chariots etc.**
 - And **Pharaoh** is the most powerful **person in Egypt...**he is not just a person **he is a god**.
 - He is the incarnation of the gods and the source of his power comes from 2 gods **Wadjet and Nekhbet**.

- **Wadjet is the snake/cobra goddess and Nekhbet is the vulture goddess** both of which appear on Pharaoh's crown. They represent all strength, power, and sovereignty in the two lands of ancient Egypt.
- The two goddesses **shine upon Pharaoh's brow** as he wears them on his crown.
- **It is hopeless, two aged men with a stick against this** - Pharaoh and his entourage, his magicians, priests and all their gods.
- But what **Yusuf does not know is that God is with them.**
- The first show down – God goes after **Pharaohs perceived source of power...the snake God.**
- Moses tells Pharaoh that the God of the Hebrews wants Pharaoh to let them go...Pharaoh says I don't know this God but show us a sign to prove it.
- **Aaron throws down the staff** and it turns into a snake...Pharaoh's magicians through their dark arts can do the same but Moses' snake swallows up the magicians...the very god that is supposed to be the source of Pharaoh's power is no match for The Lord.
- But **Pharaoh hardens his heart...and refuses to let the Hebrews go.**
- The tempo escalates – **God goes through the list of Egyptian gods** and demonstrates who has the real source of power.
- Come the 10 plagues:
 - i. Nile to blood – Hapi **the god of the Nile & Isis goddess** of the Nile.
 - ii. Frogs – **the goddess of birth Heqet** – with a frogs head
 - iii. Gnats, the sand turns to gnats - **Set, god of the desert.**
 - iv. Flies – **Uatchit (sun god) represented by a fly.**
 - v. Livestock – **Hathor goddess with a cows head** or Apis the bull god (fertility)
 - vi. Boils – **Sekhmet goddess** with power over disease.
- And so it goes, **all the way through to the last plague** – death of the first born sons.
- For **Yusuf** these things were **difficult to understand** at first but as the different plagues came **God protected the Hebrew people in Goshen.**
- The **Egyptians were getting their butts kicked** and nobody had even raised a hand.
- The thing that was most confusing for Yusuf is **why Pharaoh did not just listen to Moses and set them free.**
- He could have spared any further plagues on Egypt but the system of slavery, the wealth, power and pride prevented him (His heart was hard).
- In the same way **Jesus our saviour has destroyed** the system of slavery in our world.
- He **came and defeated Satan**, the powers and principalities that once had power have power no more.
- **Jesus was victorious; he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings.**
- **Satan no longer has power** or authority over us...we are free to leave the things that enslave us.

- **Free to move into the land of our inheritance** – the kingdom of God, we can come freely into his presence and be His people.
- **Hebrews 3 talks about Jesus** as being one better than Moses...and from this story we can see that Moses was pretty amazing.
- If this is what God did through Moses, we can **take comfort that the victory that Jesus obtained was even more spectacular.**

5. The People choose to identify themselves with God

- The battle has been spectacular, but now Yusuf is told that he needs to take **a 1 year old lamb without defect and slaughter it.**
- He must take the **blood of the lamb and place it on the sides and top** of the door frame.
- He is to **identify himself** and his household as the people of God.
- He is told that he needs to be **ready to leave.**
- That night those who marked their door posts with the blood of the lamb were **passed over** by the angel of death.
- Every firstborn son in Egypt is killed...**and Pharaoh lets the people go.**
- What we need to see here is that **up to this plague, God identified his** people and spared them from the plagues.
- But for the last plague, the people had to follow some instructions – they **had to choose God by putting the identifying mark of the blood of the lamb on the door posts.**
- This has **always been the way of God**, He does not force himself on people.
- **He makes the way possible** for people to choose him, **but he does not make that choice for us.**
- **It is the same for us today**, we talk about the **blood of the lamb.** The self sacrificial **death of Jesus and His resurrection.**
- **This blood made it possible** for all people to come into the presence of God...to come into His kingdom and live under His rule.
- The way has been made possible **but we still need to make that choice.**
- This time the choice is not about putting blood on our doorpost but about **believing that Jesus is the Christ, that he has defeated the enemy.**
- Then to live as if you believe it.
- You **need to choose to be identified as the people of God, through the Lamb of God.**

6. Egypt wants you back.

- Throughout this show down, **Pharaoh makes promises** to let the people go but whenever the plague in question stops, **he changes his mind** because he does not want to give up this resource.

- After he eventually lets the people go, he **regrets his decision and starts to pursue the Hebrews.**
- **God protects them and leads them** through the **Red sea** and destroys the Egyptian soldiers that follow them.
- But this is the thing, even though God destroyed the power of Egypt, **Egypt is not dead and has not stopped fighting.**
- **It is a war.**
- In this story **God leads the people in a direction** – He protects them from attack from behind **but they had to have faith and follow God...**because the protection comes from following.
 - **This is something we can all relate to.**
 - **We have been set free** from the things that used to enslave us – **greed, lust, drugs, alcohol, power, fame wealth etc.**
 - **These things no longer have power** over us **when we are following the way of Jesus.** If we keep moving in the **direction God is leading us through His spirit** we are safe.
 - But the thing is that although the power these things had over us has been destroyed – **they still pursue us.**
 - **If we choose to go back to Egypt** – to the drugs, the lifestyle etc. we give them the power and **authority back.**
 - **This Exodus story is the gospel message,** it is a message about God sending a saviour to make the **way open – to set his people free.**
 - But the people (**us**) **need to follow this way** - in following we are saying that we believe that Jesus is the way...
 - Prayer