

Rescue

Exodus 3
October 9, 2011

Stephan K. Turnbull
First Lutheran Church, White Bear Lake, MN

Quick Summary: Our God is a God who sets people free. He set the Israelites free from slavery thousands of years ago, and he sets people free in Jesus Christ still today.

1. Welcome
2. Introduction
 - A. “There’s a method to my madness;” “The world is her oyster;” “He is constant as the northern star.” Have you ever heard of “a pound of flesh” or “star crossed lovers.”
 - B. All those lines come from the plays and poems of William Shakespeare.
 - C. Imagine for a minute that we are huge fans of Shakespeare. In fact, we are trained actors...
 - i. We discover an unknown play. Brilliant, suspenseful, powerful. But we get to Act 5 and it’s incomplete. The end of the story is there, but the whole middle of the final act is missing.
 - ii. We’d have to fill it in. We’d have to read the first acts carefully to know how the story goes, to understand the characters and the plot. And we’d have to know the ending, so the part we fill in make sense with the ending. We can’t just take the first acts and fill them in. We have to write new parts of the story, faithful to the part we already know.
 - D. That’s how we’re reading the Big God Story. **Big God Story Slide.** High point: Creation, Fall, Story of Israel, Jesus, New Creation. We’re in Act 5, learning to live in a way that makes sense with where we’ve been and where we’re going.
3. The Story today is part of chapter 3. The Exodus
 - A. How did we get here? How did we get from creation to Abraham & Sarah to Isaac & Rebekah to Jacob & Joseph to Egypt and the Exodus
 - B. Israel crying out in their labor.
 - C. Pharaoh and Egypt not really concerned about their plight. Have you ever been in a situation where somebody was hurting you and they knew and they just didn’t care?
 - D. God has a man on the inside.
 - i. The king of Egypt, the Pharaoh, had given instructions to kill the boys, but Moses was spared. Adopted by Pharaoh’s own daughter, but recognizing himself as an Israelite.
 - ii. God had wired him up with a sense of concern for the vulnerable
 - a. Dangerous response in defending an Israelite against an Egyptian.
 - b. Then protecting and drawing water for some women in the wilderness.
 - iii. And God called him to go lead the people out of Egypt. Moses had lots of excuses as well as real weaknesses, but God sent him anyway with the promise, “I will be with you.”
 - iv. And God worked through Moses and lead the Israelites out of slavery.

4. This happened 3,500 years ago, but the Bible says that this story is our story. We live in chapter 5 of a story where this is chapter 3. This is still our story, and this is still our God. And what God is doing now in our lives is kind of like what God did then. God freed the Israelites from Egypt, and in Christ God frees us from sin and death and shame and a fallen creation into a new world. And just as God led the Israelites through the waters of the Red Sea at the start of their journey, God leads us through the waters of baptism on our way to salvation. Let me give you a couple examples.
 - A. **For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 1 Cor 10:1-2.** What God was doing in the Exodus is like what God is doing in us.
 - B. Here's another passage that says that God's work in us in Jesus is like being rescued from slavery and made into his people: **For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14.**
 - C. What God is doing now in chapter 5 is like what God did in chapter 3, but it's not just chapter 3 all over again. The difference now is what we are freed from. The Israelites were freed from literal bondage, from actual slave labor. But these passages give us a deeper insight into what holds us captive and what Jesus frees us from.
 - i. Colossians said we need to be freed from the guilt of our sin.
 - ii. We need to be freed from all kinds of temptation.
 - iii. We need to be freed from the systems of brokenness we live in, from the ways that sin has broken our families and relationships and image of ourselves.
 - iv. We need to be freed from the lie that our stories are going nowhere, that our stories have no hope, that our stories are trapped by our own failures.
 - v. We need to be freed from slavery to the power of death and joined instead to the story of resurrection and eternal life in Jesus Christ.
 - vi. And that's the freedom, the Rescue, the New Exodus that God works in our lives in Jesus. That's our story.
5. I want to ask you three questions to help you see how this story applies in your life. And you might want to write these questions down as we go through them. Three questions to find our place in this story
 - A. How am I an Israelite? This is the main way the New Testament teaches us to find ourselves in the story. How am I an Israelite?
 - i. Are you crying out to God for rescue? For healing? For help and hope? Or are you so used to the pain and so used to the dead ends that you don't even cry out anymore. The first application of this story is to tell you that God hears you. **The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. And so I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians. Exodus 3:7.** God cares about your pain.
 - ii. Hard part is that God may not be answering your prayer right away in a way that you can see or appreciate or could understand. But he *is* the God who saves His people. That's how God often spoke of himself to the Israelite. I

am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt. That was God's primary identifier in the OT. Whenever the Israelites forgot what kind of God they served, this was what they went back to.

- iii. Now God has done that for us in Jesus. What kind of God do you serve? You serve the God who became flesh for you, who cared about your plight so much that he died with you...so that you could live with him. And whenever you wonder what kind of God you serve, or whether God is all that you thought God was...and certainly many of us have gone through periods of disillusionment, Go back to this, I am the Lord your God who died for you to set you free. "I have heard the cries of my people, and I care, and so I have down to rescue them."
 - iv. If you are an Israelite in this story, and to some degree you are, then the point of this story is reassure you that God cares.
- B. Now let's write down a different question: How am I an Egyptian?
- i. Here's a truth about life we all need to know: We are not always the innocent victims. Sin is a power that enslaves us and fractures our lives. But sometimes we allow sin to work in us, and we bring fracture into the lives of others.
 - ii. God had to warn the Israelites about this. He had to warn them about how they treated the people who were vulnerable among them so that they wouldn't act like Egyptians themselves. Sometimes in their ancient economy a person would sell themselves into slavery, and God told the Israelites to respect them as people and care for them: This is from Deuteronomy 15: **If any of your people—Hebrew men or women—sell themselves to you and serve you six years, in the seventh year you must let them go free. 13 And when you release them, do not send them away empty-handed. 14 Supply them liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to them as the LORD your God has blessed you. 15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today. Deuteronomy 15:12-15** So the Exodus was not only how they themselves got saved by God, but this salvation became the model for how they were to live now.
 - iii. We need to ask ourselves, how are we Egyptians who are hurting other people for our own good? And then how does God want us to live differently, to hear the cries of those who cry out, to show grace as we have been shown grace, to love as we have been loved.
- C. And once you start thinking about this question, you'll be ready to start asking the third one. How am I Moses?
- i. How is God be calling you to bring life and freedom into the lives of others?
 - ii. Part of what the Biblical picture of Jesus is that he fulfills what God never finished through Moses. In fact, God promised this from the very beginning. Deuteronomy 18 says, **I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. Deuteronomy 18:18.** That prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus who has come to show us God's will and set us

free. And any of us who are his disciples follow in His way and bring his freedom to others.

- iii. How might you be Moses? Maybe God has wired you up to care about the vulnerable in way you can't shut off, even though you're also reluctant. Is God calling you to serve Him in that kind of way? Maybe you have weaknesses that you think should stop you, that you can't serve God that way. The same thing was true of Moses. And God said go anyway, and I will be with you.
- iv. Because of Jesus, all of us are Moses in some way. We all have words of hope and grace and healing to speak to people who don't know that God cares. Who are crying out and reaching out to all the wrong things for life and salvation. Who are so used to slavery that they think it's normal too. But you are a witness to what God has done in you. And you're not perfect. You're barely out of Egypt yourself, but God promises to be with you too
 - a. You can't force people to accept it. People didn't always want to listen to Moses either. God has to set people free.
 - b. But you can tell people your own experience, what God has done in you, and invite them to see for themselves.