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Living Life Together by Trusting Our Mighty Deliverer

- Do you like drama?...when I say the word “drama”...what kinds of thoughts come to your mind?...
 - my guess is that for many, your initial response would be...absolutely not...I don't need any more drama in my life...
 - in fact, some of you probably even thought of a phrase that has become very popular in our culture...”drama queen...”...
 - and we use that phrase to describe a person who seems to be in the middle of some sort of crisis, real or imagined, all the time...
 - and it's amazing how frequently when you get that person involved in the plan or the activity, there's going to be some kind of major issue...
 - she's just a drama queen...and if there isn't a real problem to solve...she'll make one you...do you know the kind of person I'm talking about?...
 - and I'm not sure why we just use the phrase “drama queen” because I know a fair number of men who seem to fit that description as well...
 - there's just always some issue or controversy swirling around them...
- in fact, you may have even had to distance yourself from certain kinds of people because it feels overwhelming at times...and you've said, not in a mean-spirited way but just a realistic one...I can't add senseless drama to the equation right now...
 - if it's real and necessary and from the hand of the Lord – of course – but of the drama queen variety?...no thanks...
- so that may be our first response to the drama question...
 - but then when you stop and think about it, you might say – wait a minute though – we wouldn't want a drama-free life either, would we?...
 - Kris bought me a great book for Christmas about a WWII vet who had been a great runner in high school and college and then was shot down and became a prisoner of war...I've really enjoyed reading it but one of the reasons is...you don't know how it's going to end...
 - and there's all sorts of drama...
 - what was happening with his mom and dad when they were told their son had died when you the reader know that's not true...
 - and what was happening when they were lying in their life-rafts with sharks bumping up against the bottom and jumping onto the raft and trying to pull the men under...
 - or then all the events when the rafts finally washed up on shore and he became a prisoner of war...
 - it's a great book...because you're not sure how it's going to turn out and if the man is going to find a way to survive...
 - and you find yourself rooting for him and hoping for him and getting fired up on his behalf...
 - and I haven't actually finished the book yet...do you realize you could ruin it for me in a matter of seconds...how?...by telling me how it ends...
 - I don't want to know...actually I do want to know...but I want to know the way the author tells the story...
 - so in that sense, we would say that drama is good...having to wait to see how the story will conclude can heighten our senses and make us more appreciative of the lessons the author is trying to convey...

- so where does that leave us with drama?...
 - maybe we would say – there’s bad drama and there’s good drama...how about that?...
- now let me ask you this question...does God ever use drama?...
 - is “delayed timing for the purpose of effect” ever a method he would use to draw us to Himself?...
 - and what’s the value of understanding that and the penalty for getting it wrong?...
 - with that question in mind, please open your Bible to Exodus chapter 14...page 51 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- our theme this year is **Living Life Together**...
 - we’re thinking about what steps we can take to be sure that our church is a place that is easy for men and women to feel/be connected...
 - there are responsibilities on the side of the church organizationally...
 - there are responsibilities on the part of each person attending...
 - connection is a two way street...
 - but we’re thinking especially about what all of that looks like this year...
 - so we’ve been working our way through the book of Exodus...which is the story of how God drew His people together at that point in biblical history...and we’re trying to learn all the lessons we possibly can to live “together with all the saints” as Paul said in Ephesians chapter 3...
- last week we left the children of Israel after God displayed His power in an incredibly awesome fashion...and those events take our breath away for a variety of reasons, but one of them is that the Exodus was prophesied by God over 500 years before it occurred...did you know that?...God told Abraham in the very initial days of the establishment of the nation of Israel that all of this would unfold...
 - remember the call of Abraham occurred (roughly) around 2100 BC...
 - the Exodus occurred (roughly) around 1450 BC...
 - here’s what God told Abraham... **Genesis 15:12-14 - Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror *and* great darkness fell upon him. God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. “But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.**
- now please just think about that for a minute...this is Genesis 15...Abraham and Sarah were old and they did not have one child at this point in the story...yet God promises to make them a mighty nation, and then he tells him about his descendants beings strangers in a land that is not theirs...and He even states the exact number of years the oppression will last...and the He says that He will judge that nation at the appointed time, and oh by the way...your descendants will leave with many possessions...
- I want to be very careful how I say this – because it could be misunderstood in a myriad of ways...but here it is – our God definitely has a flair for the dramatic...in other words, don’t miss the fact that He purposes orchestrates the timing of events in a way that is intended to scream messages to His people if we’ll simply have ears to hear and eyes to see.
- now today the people have been urged by the Egyptians to leave after the last plague just like God had told them...but the story’s not over....is it?...because now it’s time for them to be fully delivered...

- that's what we want to talk about today... **Living Life Together by Trusting Our Mighty Deliverer...**

- we're talking this morning about Living Life Together by Trusting Our Mighty Deliverer...
- with the time we have remaining, let's look for **three principles to help us respond to drama that's been orchestrated by God Himself.**

I. God Sometimes Purposely Brings Us to the End of Ourselves.

- one of the ways that Jehovah is demonstrating His uniqueness and singularity is by orchestrating these events, not simply responding to them...
- we saw that a moment ago when God prophesied these events 500 years before they occurred...that's one of the strong reasons to believe...the fact that God knows what is going to happen in the future...
 - that's the kind of God I want, how about you?...
 - He's also in control of each of these plagues---He's the Creator—and if he wants a swarm of flies to do certain things...that's what's going to happen...
 - if He wants the frogs to obey Him...then they will...
- but what we have to conclude from this text is – sometimes God believes that the best leadership He can give us in certain situations is not to immediately provide everything we think we need at the time...
- clearly there are times when God allows us to come to very end of our resources....to feel like we're backed into a corner and there is absolutely no way out...
- why?...

A. So we can see the Lord's power in a fresh, new way.

- **Exodus 14:13-14 - But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. "The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent."**

- when's the last time you can remember saying – I have done everything I know to do...now my only choice is to stand by and see the salvation of the Lord...
 - I have to wait until the day the Lord chooses to fight for me...
 - I don't have any more strength...
 - I don't have any more resources...
 - I don't have any more choices...

- and that is perfectly OK...

- because now I'm in a position where undoubtedly the Lord is going to teach me new lessons about His power and His ability to provide...

- and I would rather wait and do things His way and learn about His power than use my sinful means to get my way and miss the lesson...

- isn't that what Paul did in 1 Corinthians 12?...that's the story of Paul's thorn in the flesh...

- how did Paul respond?... **2 Corinthians 12:8 - Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.**

- was there anything wrong with that prayer?...no...God has invited us to bring our requests to Him...that's one of the marvelous provisions we enjoy if we know Christ...
- could God have removed Paul's thorn?...absolutely...He could have prevented the thorn in the first place...

- and now, after Paul prays...He could have removed the thorn after the first prayer, right?
 - or He could have removed the thorn after the second prayer, or the third...
 - but is that what God did?...
 - **2 Corinthians 12:9a - And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”**
- do you hear that?....sometimes God purposely brings us to the end of ourselves...
 - with no other choice but to wait on Him...
 - so what did Paul do?...
 - have a pity party?...wait for God with a sour attitude?...
 - **2 Corinthians 12:9b-10 - Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**
 - that’s why the psalmist said... **Psalms 119:71 - It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.**
- there are many people in our church family who could give ringing testimony of the truth of this principle...
 - 1) people who lost their jobs in this economy...
 - did everything they knew to do...
 - and then just...waited...
 - and many men and women could say that while it was hard, it was good...
 - they now learned lessons about the deliverance of God they could not have learned any other way...
 - 2) people who are still waiting for a child who has gone astray...
 - they’ve done everything they know to do...
 - they’ve communicated...they’ve prayed...
 - they’ve read books...talked to others...
 - and where are they today?...
 - a. in a position of trust, having learned more about the power of God to sustain them than they ever knew before...
 - b. looking at the top of the mountain ready to begin the celebration
- and what is the effect of men and women who understand this principle?...
- **Isaiah 40:28-31 - Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, And to *him who* lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.**
- and please remember this – it’s not just so that you can learn about God’s power in a fresh, new way...it’s also...

B. So even the hardest hearts can be softened.

Exodus 14:4 - I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD. And they did so.

Exodus 14:18 - Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.

- have you thought about this...maybe the Lord has brought you to the end of yourself, not primarily because of what He's trying to teach you (though there will be plenty of lessons to go around)...but because of what He's trying to teach someone else?...
 - that boss that is giving you an incredibly hard time right now?...
 - why doesn't God just...(you fall in the blank)...
 - maybe God wants to let that boss see the unique way you're responding to the mistreatment because He's drawing that boss to Himself through you...
 - maybe God wants you to respond properly to the taunting of that x-spouse so your children can see the marked difference between the lifestyle of someone who knows Christ and someone who doesn't?...
- friend – is there a situation in your life where God has purposely brought you to the end of yourself?...maybe Exodus 14:14 is for you today... **Exodus 14:14 - The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.**

II. The Timing of God's Justice is Always Better than Ours.

- over 500 years before this occurred, God told Abraham that the oppressors would be judged...
- and the Lord allowed the oppressors to frighten the fire out of His people...and chase them all the way into the parted Red Sea before He acted on their behalf...
- can you imagine the scene?...
 - Uh...Moses...Moses...the Egyptians are coming...I know, stand still...Uh...Moses...
 - then at the very last moment...God commands Moses to stretch his hand over the sea and it parts...which is both a good news and bad news kind of thing...
 - and remember, there are probably 2 million of them at this point...Scripture tells us 600,000 men...
 - so how does that work?...single file!...everybody be patient...
 - who knows how it worked...but the people are walking through the parted Red Sea on dry ground...
 - that's the good news...what's the bad news?... **Exodus 14:23 - Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea.**
 - if that's not drama, orchestrated at the sovereign hand of our mighty God, what is...
 - so you're moving through the parted Red Sea on dry ground...with mountains of water piling up on either side...little fish faces pushing their way out of the water...[Stevie – this is no time to be fishing]...
 - but then you look back...Uh...Moses...Uh...Moses...
 - I know God is really powerful and stuff...but do you think he had time to think this through?...
- and what message is this text shouting?...

A. The Lord is carefully orchestrating each of these events.

Exodus 13:17 - Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt."

Exodus 13:21 - The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

Exodus 14:3 - For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.'

- do you believe that God is doing that for you?...right now?...
- and are you trusting the timing of your mighty deliverer even if He hasn't delivered you yet in this particular situation?...please always remember this...

B. God is never late but nor is He ever early.

- Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

- and remember the context here – this is an issue of judgment...
- many times, in order for our pain to be alleviated...someone else has to be judged...
- **2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**

- so what are we to do?...

C. Leave the timing of God's vengeance to Him.

- Hebrews 10:30-31 - For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

III. After God Has Delivered You, Find a Way to Remind Yourself and Others Often.