

April 16, 2022
Easter Sunday
Pastor Matt Duerr

“So You Wanna Go Back to Egypt?”

Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. You know there's a variety of challenges in the pastoral ministry, and one of those challenges comes when people make requests of you. Requests like, ‘Pastor why don't we do a Bible study that walks us through the Bible chronologically from the beginning of time to the end of time?’ And you might say well yeah that's probably a big challenge. That's covering all 66 books and that's a lot of Bible study to write.’ That's not what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about is what's in those Bible books, what's in those studies. You come to those challenging part like the book of Exodus. You might say, ‘well what makes Exodus such a challenge?’ Well, we do. Let me explain.

In the book of Exodus, we see that God promised to deliver His people from out of Egypt; and deliver to them the Promised Land. He started that deliverance by telling Moses, go down to Pharaoh, tell him let my people go. Moses balked at that, but God gave him some signs, some miracles to do in front of Pharaoh so that Pharaoh would know that God was with Moses. The first was when he went to Pharaoh and told him, let my people go and Pharaoh said not hardly. And so, Moses showed him, just so you know, God is on my side. He took a staff threw it on the ground to become a snake. There we are introduced to two gentlemen, Jannes and Jambres. They were magicians or sorcerers and by their secret arts, they were able to cast their staffs on the ground and to become snakes. Of course, the snake that was made by God out of Moses’ staff ate their two snakes. But still they could do the same thing and Pharaoh wasn’t impressed.

So, the next day God told Moses go down meet Pharaoh by the Nile. It’s time for sign number two. Stretch out your staff over the Nile, it will turn to blood and the water throughout Egypt will turn to blood. And so, Moses went and told Pharaoh, let my people go. He wouldn't. He

stretched out his staff, and he got the blood. But Jannes and Jambres took water that was in the vessel, and they were able to do the same thing. The second plague was frogs coming up out of the Nile. Moses put his staff out, frogs start coming and invading Egypt. And yet Jannes and Jambres, by their secret arts could do the same thing. Then we got the gnats, probably trillions of them. Jannes and Jambres could not do this, and they told Pharaoh this is the finger of God. Still Pharaoh said no, not letting them go.

Next came the plague of flies; wouldn't let them go. The death of all the livestock, wouldn't let them go. Then boils on the people, wouldn't let them go. Hail that battered down the crops, wouldn't let them go. Locusts that came and ate all that wasn't battered down and anything that was left standing. He still wouldn't let them go. Then darkness covering all of Egypt. At least for the Egyptians lived, the sun was still shining where the Israelites were. He wouldn't let them go.

That led to what we celebrated this past Thursday, Passover where God struck the first born of all Egyptians. Pharaoh let them go. And the people were so happy to see the Israelites going after the devastation. I guess you could call this Gods' sanctions against them through the plagues. That we read that the children of Israel plundered them. The Egyptians were 'please leave, here take our gold, take our silver. Get out of here!'

And at that time, they left. Where were they going? To the Promised Land. How were they getting there? Well, God conveniently did something. He came down and was present with them in the form of a pillar of cloud that went before them. And they would follow wherever God led them. That pillar of cloud went up and then covered them giving them shade during the day. But God did not take the fast route. He didn't take what was called "the Kings Highway" which skirted the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea and was the fastest route to get to the Promised Land. No, He hung a hard right and took them down into the wilderness down by the Red Sea. And when Pharaoh saw that they were in the wilderness and it looked like they were wandering, he realized 'I've

lost my slaves.' And so, he mustered his army, he went out to get them, trapped the children of Israel on the edge of the shore of the Red Sea.

What was the children of Israel's response to this? 'You brought us down here so we could die.' Moses goes to God. God says, be still, do nothing. Tell the people, 'The Lord's going to fight for you, He's going to deliver you, just like He said.'" And Moses told the people, "Be still, do nothing, the Lord will fight for you." He stretched out his staff over the Red Sea, boom, the Red Sea, parts. A strong wind comes through at night, dries it out, next morning they get up, they walk through to the other side. Pharaoh sees them doing this, they go in after them, and God causes the water to crash on Pharaoh, destroys his army. Egypt is totally defeated.

Three days later, they're starting to run low on water, what do they do? "You brought us out here to die, would that we still be in Egypt." God changed the bitter water of Mara to sweet water. Forty-five days after they had left Egypt, they're starting to run low on supplies. What do they do? Complain! 'Oh, if we could only be back in Egypt.' God provided them the manna and the quail. And so it goes, over and over and over through the entire book of Exodus. When would have been better if you had just left us in Egypt. We wanna go back to Egypt! And people in the Bible study then want to say: "Were they stinking, crazy?" They saw the plagues, each one of them designed to take on one of the Egyptian gods. God was showing He had power every one of the Egyptian gods. They saw the Red Sea. They saw Pharaoh defeated. They got the water; they got the manna and quail. Over and over, they saw God, in their presence daily through that pillar of cloud, pillar of fire, and all the things He did. And they want to go back to Egypt???

About this time, you might be saying, "Pastor Matt, it's Easter! What does going back to Egypt, have to do with Easter? And I would contend, everything. Bear with me a moment here. They saw God in action. They had heard His promise to deliver them, and to deliver to them; and their job was trust Him. And we have the testimony of the apostles and evangelists that tell us we are supposed to trust that God delivers us, gives us salvation, and what are we supposed to trust? You

are probably going to say, 'trust God.' And my response is, 'good try.' But it's more than that.

Now your mind might be spinning right now. And if not should start spinning, and going well, if we're not supposed to trust God, if it's more than trusting God, what is it? And then you might say, 'oh, OK it's Easter. Trust that God sent His Son.' Well done, but it's more than that. 'OK, ok, hold it, wait hold it, wait, trust that God sent His son and His Son died on the cross for us.' This is most certainly true. But it's more than that. 'Now I get it, that's what it is, it's Easter, Jesus rose from the dead.' You are getting warmer, but no. 'He's coming back to take us home?' Yeah, that's a good answer and very true, but it's more than that. And now you might be saying, 'wait a second Pastor Matt, we just did the Nicene Creed, we did the Apostles Creed, or Nicene Creed every Sunday, we just covered it all. What more is there?'

Let's go back to the wilderness. What was their real struggle? It was trust. It was trusting that God would *follow through* on His promise to deliver them from Egypt and deliver to them the Promised Land. It was trusting Him and that *He would do it all*. And whenever things started to get tough, where there were challenges, they would forget that God had said He would do it all. Because they would start to say, 'certainly we must do something.'

And that is the massive challenge for us today, trusting that God *has* done it all. He *has* delivered us from sin, death, and the power of the devil, and that heaven really awaits us because it is His gift to us. A common question, or observation that I get, or see as a pastor; is that people will say 'that sounds too good to be true. Certainly, there's more to it than that.' Or people will say something like, 'if I live a good life, I'm going to heaven.' Or you know this whole thing about God's done it all, and we need to live a good life, and then we have heaven; kind of seems like a scam to me. Like you dangle heaven out there to manipulate people to come to church and do good things.' By the way, I've heard all three of these in the last two weeks.

And that's where Easter comes in. It's why today is so important. It's why Saint Paul writes, "If Christ didn't rise, our faith is in vain." Why? Because, if He didn't rise, then He didn't deliver us. Death won, because he'd be, well he'd still be dead just like every other religious leader there is. But He did rise! So, when He died on the cross, He paid the penalty of sin. The wages of sin is death, our sin was on Him. He took it on Himself and the penalty for it was to die. But when He rose from the dead, He overcame the penalty of sin for all of us. He was victorious! He beat death! And today there is victory in the resurrection. And you might be saying, "but pastor, I do believe He rose!" The big question is this? Do you believe it was enough? Because everything else I just said of what I've heard in the last two weeks from a variety of people, from all over the place, is that it wasn't enough. It's that I need to do more. If I just go to church, I'll be going to heaven. If I just help the poor, or help the lost animals, or do all sorts of different good things, surely, I will go to heaven. And those are all basically saying I want to go back to Egypt. I want to earn my way to heaven, and you can't. I can't. We're all sinners and fall short of the glory of God. But that's the message of Easter, that God knows that, and He did it all!

You don't go to church because it's going to get you to heaven. You don't attend Bible study because it's going to get you to heaven. You don't do the good work because it's going to get you to heaven. You do those things to honor God because He's done everything for you to get to heaven. This is what pleases Him who has done everything for you to go to heaven. When we do these things, it glorifies Him because we do it for Him. It honors Him because we do it for Him not for us. He's done it all.

That's why we come to church to thank him every Sunday because every Sunday is a celebration of Easter. We are reminded every Sunday that Christ rose on the first day of the week. And so, we come on the first day the week starting that new week saying, "Thank God I'm saved, I'm redeemed!" I don't have to do anything other than trust that God has done it all. And when you think about somebody doing it all for you, don't you want to honor them, thank them, praise them?

I mean how many of you have somebody mow your lawn for you and you pay them for it? You do that because you're thankful they come, and they mow it and they've earned it. That's why we're here, God did much more than mow our lawn, He saved us! Here's our thanks, our praise, our offerings. So, we come, not to earn our way, but to thank Him who has done it.

That's the message of Easter we live a good life to honor Him, to praise Him, to thank Him. We embrace the message of Easter, that He's done at all. We live the message of Easter because He's done it all. We rejoice in the message of Easter because He's done it all. He's done enough and it is finished! In our Saviors' Name, Amen.