

## The Eight Great Core Stories of the Bible: Story #2 – The Exodus

Sunday February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010 Ladner United Church at 900 and 1100am

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Exodus 3:1-15, Exodus 7-11, Exodus 12-15

+++++“Gracious and loving God, may the meditations of our hearts and the words of my lips if they be your words be worthy and acceptable unto you and may your people hear your word either through me or despite me. Amen. +++++”

Over the next weeks up to Easter Sunday at worship and in our Lent Easter Study group (21 people plus me) eight of the great “core” or basic stories of the Bible...

last week God’s call to Abraham and Sarah, this week the Exodus – associated with Moses...then the Sinai Covenant (10 commandments), the Promised Land, the Monarchy – Saul, David and Solomon and then Jesus’ life, the Cross and the Resurrection...

These core stories and their characters and themes emerge over and over again in the biblical narrative.

They frame what is perhaps the most widely published, translated and read book in human history...

So beautiful yet so complex...easily misused and often misunderstood even in grasping how it came to be...as a “book”

– it did not drop out of the heavens one day, bound in black in King James English as beautiful as those words may be...

Next week – as we look at the Sinai covenant we’ll learn something of how those tablets containing the Ten Commandments Moses brought down from Mount Sinai ended up in the “black book”

Letting the bible speak has something to do with understanding the questions the bible to answer...

We often come first to the bible from the wrong direction?

We have our questions? What does God think of the internet and should Christians use it?

We begin thumbing through the bible....looking for insight – but alas – there are neither words of Jesus on the internet nor a set of commandments to follow on the subject...

But our faith does speak to our life...

And to hear God through the bible in the 21<sup>st</sup> century...we must first go back to those stories and ask another question?

When that material was written or told? What question was the story addressing?

So we have the story – now we have to figure out the question...go backwards before we go forwards...

Recapping last week – we learned that the Book of Genesis does not answer that great 20<sup>th</sup> century question: “how is the world” created question?” – The debate between creationism and science was not on the mind of the writer of Genesis...

Rather those stories answer the question – why was the world created, who created it and what purpose did God have for us humans...

and then when creation which God had decided was very, very good... all fell apart...what did God do...to address the problem that human beings...

, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the ancestors of Noah, the people who built the tower of Babel...

could not live within the boundaries of the relationship between creator and the created...they wanted to do their own thing, to be like God, to control creation and it fell apart...

And God tried punishment – and it didn’t work and God tried mercy and re-creation and it didn’t work...so instead God decided to choose two senior citizens who used to hang around a lot at McKee House named Abraham and Sari – form a relationship with them and use them to bless the rest of the world...

So Abraham and Sarah despite their old age have children - their family multiplies and prospers – (covered in a lot of detail in Genesis chapter 12 -50)

and eventually – the 12 sons of Jacob (who become the 12 tribes) – who is Abraham’s grandson – the youngest being Joseph – all end up in the land of Egypt due to a famine in the land of promise that God led Abraham and Sarah to...

And the people of Israel having arrived in Egypt – like it and they settle in for the long haul – for generations and they make babies and they grow in number...

until a point when the Egyptian Pharaoh who does not remember the good relationships of those 430 years Abraham and Sarah have lived in Egypt years ago...

Feels politically threatened by these “refugees and foreigners” in his land and adopts two courses of action that we in the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century are familiar with:

He enslaves them, takes away all of their rights and forces them to make bricks from straw and mud to build the monumental buildings of his empire...that's right out of Nazi Germany and World War 2 - Adolf Hitler must have studied the book of Exodus)

And he adopts a policy of passive genocide...

The Egyptian midwives are commanded to kill the Hebrew babies that are males – and spare the females – meaning more women than men and creating opportunities for Egyptian males to marry Hebrew women and create an Egyptian bloodline

(Today we see that all over the world – former Yugoslavia in the 1990's where opposing sides killed the boys and young men and raped the women of their "enemies"

And the people begin to ask: What are you going to do about this God?

The promises you made to Abraham and Sarah – that we would be a great nation with our own land with descendents as many as the stars and that we would bless the world are being threatened with extinction...

And these were not passive gentile questions...

Questions born of agony and blood, and suffering and pain, and oppression and hardship and loss of faith and death...

Why this happening is and what will God do and how can we get out of this? (And Exodus means literally – "the way out"

Does that not sound familiar – God what is "the way out?" for

Downtown East Side – what is the way out for the poorest postal code in Canada

the raging problems of addiction in our society: expansion of addiction difficulties from alcohol and drugs to things like gambling, pornography, video games - vast majority of pornography– uses are 12-17 year old males in North America (Chris Hedges) what is the way out of this dilemma which has such a personnel and social cost in terms of lives and financial resources...

There is a whole world of beliefs, assumptions, behavior, fears, patterns that come from all kinds of places and people in our lives that we seek freedom from...and form part of our life's journey – how do we find a way out...

And so we ask can God and how God can deliver us from...create an "exodus" a way out for us...

When you're stuck and you know what you are stuck in is not good – and you cannot see a way out – it's a horrible feeling...

As it must have felt for the people pounding mud and straw into bricks under the hot Egyptian sun and with the yells, scowls, whips and taunts of their Egyptian taskmasters – it is hopeless...

What can or will God do about this?

Well - there was one Hebrew mother (we often read the bible from the perspective of the men but there are many strong and faithful women in the biblical story) who was determined her son would not be ethnically cleansed...

So she made the choice of a desperate mother and put her baby in a wicker basket and set him adrift on the Nile River...

It so happened that an Egyptian princess bathing on the shores saw the basket and took the child into her household and raised him as a Prince of Egypt – his name was Moses (means in Hebrew out of the water)

And so he grew up to be a person living in two worlds – Hebrew and Egyptian...

one day –witnessing a Egyptian overseer beating a Hebrew slave – he killed the Egyptian and fled for his life to the land of Midian – where he married, had children, settled down and adopted an rural agrarian life far from Egypt's terrors and the slavery of the Hebrew people and made a living tending his father in law Jethro's flock...

And one day in the desert he saw a bush that burned but was not consumed...

Curiosity brought him to approach it and as he came clear – he heard the voice of the Living God...

Take your shoes off

You are walking on holy ground

And the second great core story begins...

God having invested all this time and passion in creation and establishing a relationship with humanity

Is not going to let God's people live for ever in slavery...

God is going to create an "exodus" – a way out

Deliverance

In Latin – salvation comes from the Latin word – salve – meaning wholeness

In Hebrew – Exodus means to deliver – from which the root of the name Jesus comes

The one who would ultimately come – following in the footsteps of Moses to set people free from sin, death and evil both in the now and present and in the then and future...

This God is in the creation business – but he did not just wind up the clock at the beginning of time to let it tick away for eternity – this God YHWH – I am who I am – is in the business of liberation from oppression

God identifies the problem:

Then the LORD said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings,<sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey...

And how does God free the people...

God does not wave a magic wand and make it all better...

God does not require hundreds of animals for sacrifice or some large financial gift to the Building Fund as a sort of eternal life payoff

God does not recruit and train an army larger than the Pharaoh's and set up the battle of Armageddon...

Rather God calls a human being

Speaks to that human being and tells that human being to take a step of faith and be apart of the liberation mission

<sup>9</sup>The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup>So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.'

And Moses – like all human beings – you and I included – begins to immediately raise his own objections<sup>1</sup>

Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'

Moses stuttered and was not a public speaker...he wasn't confident, he was intimidated...

And God has an answer for that...

<sup>12</sup>He said, 'I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.'

And Moses also had a choice...and it is the choice that each of us has when we identify and confront and wrestle with those sources of oppression either in our hearts and lives or in the world...

And it's an understandable one – go back to Egypt and face the both the reality of the situation – or stay with that “comfortable and know” way...

Whether it's you or a family member battling an addiction, or your wondering if you really want to get involved with helping your neighbor...

We can choose – Moses could have walked away from the burning bush and spent all the rest of his life in Midian...

its not easy thing that Moses has been called to do...and it will take a long time – the people of Israel will wander in the desert for forty years – liberation from our fears and addictions can be a long journey – but there is always a way out...

Pharaoh is not ready to give up neither his pool of free labour nor his dreams of greatness and power...

We to do not easily give up our addictions, fears and enslavements...they have a powerful hold on us....

But through a series of encounters and plaques...Moses and Aaron (appointed by God to be Moses' voice – God always provide)

Sends the Angel of Death to all the homes in the land and on one terrible evening, the first born son and male animal in each household dies,

Including Pharaoh's eldest son...

Only those Hebrew households with the blood of the lamb on the door frame our spared...

(From that experience and meal – comes both Passover and Communion in the Christian tradition)

And Pharaoh in grief lets the people go – his heart to harden only one more time

And that ends when the waters of the Red Sea at Moses command destroy the pursuing armies of the Pharaoh after parting to bring the people of Israel to safety...

What does it say to us?

Well our God is in the business of changing songs of lament to praise!

God will and desire is for “exodus” – to help you and I and the world find a “way out”

And to do that God often raises up, identifies and equips – despite their own sense of inadequacy a person,

Individual

A group of people

A community

But usually when God does the work of "exodus" - God does that work through people...

We might wish God would do it differently – but we all know it to be true...and we do not do finding a way out journey alone – God often accompanies us not only in the spirit but through the gift of other people

Express that truth in many stories...

A hobbit named Frodo and his motley company have to save the world by returning the ring to Mordor

The fate of the world hangs upon the actions of a young boy named Luke Skywalker, his two robots, an arrogant Hans Solo and a feisty Princess Leia

Harry Potter, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger stand between the world and Lord Voldemort...

Peter, Susan, Lucy and Edmund are commissioned by Aslan the Great Lion to save Narnia from the grip of the Winter Wicked Witch

And ultimately and in some sense of glorious song – you may remember that I said...

There is a way out –

The core stories will culminate in Jesus' resurrection – God's way to new life through sin, death and darkness

And we by faith become those who find the way to new life...and we walk with others as "little Christ's" to journey with them to the new life...

The Exodus – the way out

