

Fear Not, Stand Firm, and See Salvation!

Let's do a quick review.

During the time of Moses

The Hebrew people were slaves in Egypt.

400 years earlier, Joseph, the first Hebrew slave

Became the Pharaoh's right hand man.

He brought his family from Canaan to Egypt

During a time of severe famine.

Pharaoh treated Joseph and his immediate family well

Throughout his time as ruler.

But he died and was replaced with someone else

Who felt threatened by the Hebrews'

Increasing numbers and prosperity.

He started a campaign of genocide

Instructing the Egyptians midwives

To kill the newborn Hebrew males.

Pharaoh's daughter saved Moses from genocide

After his mother placed him adrift

In a basket in the Nile.

She took him to the palace where Moses is raised

As an adopted son of the Pharaoh.

Later, as a grown man,

Moses witnesses a slave driver's abusive behavior,

Toward a fellow Hebrew slave.

And in a moment of rage,

He murders the Egyptian slave boss.

He flees for his life into the wilds of Midian.

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He marries a Midian priest's daughter, Zipporah,
And works as a shepherd for his in-law's flocks.

While caring for the sheep,
Moses witnesses a burning bush.

But as he approaches he realizes the fire,
Isn't consuming the bush.

He goes for a closer look.

And from within the bush, God speaks!

God calls Moses into leadership
And sends him back to Egypt.

Moses returns and confronts Pharaoh
And demands him to let his people go.

And only after suffering through 10 plagues
And the angel of death, the first Passover
Pharaoh finally sends the Hebrews packing.

In our scripture reading today
We find the Hebrew people fleeing Egypt
Some 600,000 men plus women and children.

The Lord leads them by day in a pillar of cloud
And by night in a pillar of fire.

Pharaoh reconsidered his decision and gives chase.

They pursue the Hebrews
And trap them along the shores of the Red Sea.

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When the people saw Pharaoh's army behind them
And nothing but water in front of them
They panic.

***Is it because there are no graves in Egypt,
That you took us out here to die?***

But Moses replies,

Sit down, shut up, and see what the Lord will do!

And you all know the rest of the story.

The sea parts, the Hebrew people walk through
Pharaoh's army follows.

The Hebrews get to the other side
The waters come crashing in
And every single Egyptian soldier drowns.

If Abraham and Sarah's story
Marks the beginning of the Nation of Israel
The Exodus marks their corporate identity.

The Exodus event is their defining moment.

It shaped and formed them as a people.

It bound them together
And served as a constant reminder of God's faithfulness.

Why?

You see, the central figure in the Exodus story is not Moses.

It is not Pharaoh.

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It is not Miriam or Aaron
Or Zipporah . . .

They're all supporting cast.

The central figure in the Exodus story is God.

This is God's story!

God's work
God's grace
God's doing . . .

The miraculous event told around every table
Of every household, of every generation
Of every Jewish family.

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery (Ex. 20:2 NIV).

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If the Exodus event was the defining moment
For the nation of Israel.

Then the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
Is the signature moment for Christians.

As people in NT time sought to understand
The event surrounding Jesus Christ
They looked to the Exodus event for understanding.

Jesus becomes the sacrificial lamb
Whose blood was splattered over the Hebrew's door.

It is Jesus who walks us through our baptism in the Red Sea
And guides us through the wilderness of our lives.

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And it is Jesus who has prepares a place for us
And will come and take us home
To the Promised Land.

In our Christian worldview
It is Jesus who becomes our Exodus event.

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Michael Walzer in his book, *Exodus and Revelation*
Simplifies the analogy even more.

He writes we can learn three things from the Exodus event:

1. Where ever you live, it is Egypt.
2. And that what lay beyond is the Promised Land
3. And to get there you have to go through the wilderness.

The exodus story is our story too.

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I listened intently to the Senate Hearing Committee
This past Thursday
Both Dr. Ford's and Judge Kavanaugh's.

What I saw cut me deep.

What I saw was a woman deeply affected
By an incidence of sexual assault
A wound she has carried deep within for years.

I saw a man who sought to defend his name
Trapped in his own sense of indignation
Over the allegations against him

Who sought to convince the world
Of his honesty and integrity
To the point of lashing out.

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What I saw were two political parties
So entrenched in their ideologies and politics
They heard nothing from the other side.

I saw disrespect, division, disunity, and dysfunction.

It was a complete and complex mess!

Bondage? For sure!

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What I heard this past Friday
Was of one more incident of carnage
In Jos, Nigeria, where Judith is from.

The continued killings of innocent people
Found in one ethnic tribe's hatred for another.

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We hear about the continuing endemic of opioid abuse.

We know of the mental anguish of so many
Suffering from the effects of depression and anxiety
Of suicidal thoughts and paranoia.

We witness the effects of substance abuse
Of alcoholism, prescription drugs, illicit drugs.

We are trapped by our own sins
And the sins perpetrated on us.

And if we have found wholeness
Someone in our family hasn't . . .

It affects us all.

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But there is freedom in God's Saving Grace.

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God's Spirit of Redemption is at work in the world.

There is an Exodus just waiting to happen!

Fear not, stand firm, and see God's salvation!

This is a broken world in need of a Savior!

May we be open to God's work of salvation
In our own personal lives
And in the world around us.

And may we hear anew Christ's message to the world:

Luke 4:18-19 NIV

***The Spirit of the Lord is upon me
Because he has anointed me
To proclaim good news to the poor.***

***He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind
To set at liberty those who are oppressed
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.***

I close with a prayer by Kaitlin Curtice in *Sojourners*

O God, this morning when we woke to your presence in and around us, we also woke to a heavy world, and in this world, we can't make sense of all the things that are wrong and should be made right.

We cannot fathom that people are judged on the color of their skin, that lives are worth less because their pockets are empty, that violence is an everyday occurrence, and it

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seems that no place is safe.

So when we wake to the sunrise and know that you are still good, teach us what it means to seek goodness when the world is dark.

O God, teach us what it means to live in grace — not just for ourselves, but for the collective whole.

We have been individuals for far too long, and in that individualism, we've forgotten how to hold each other.

We need to return again to a love that holds together community — A love based on the way we belong to each other . . . a return to our wholeness based on compassion toward others.

And in that returning, we find that you are always bringing us back, not to a world in which we do not see color or class, but into a world in which we see it and believe that sacred love is the imprint on everyone and everything, anyway.

O God, in a heavy world, we need to remember that we belong to each other, and in that remembering, that we belong to you.

Teach us.

Teach us because the future depends on it.

Remind us, we pray.

Amen.