

2/6/2021

Sermon Series: The Big Picture

Exodus 12:21-32 & 37

21 Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. 23 When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

24 “Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. 25 When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. 26 And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ 27 then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’” Then the people bowed down and worshiped. 28 The Israelites did just what the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron.

29 At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. 30 Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

31 During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord as you have requested.

32 Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.”
...37 The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Sukkoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children.

The Big Picture: Community Part 1: Exodus

Before we get started with today’s message, I want to be sure I offer some more copies of the book that is guiding our sermon series that’s called *The Story of God, The Story of Us*. Would anyone like a copy of it who hasn’t received one yet? They’re free of charge! [Pass out books]

I'm really enjoying reading this book again. I particularly like that it's written in a narrative way, basically like a novel, but all the way through it are the stories that make up the big story of the Bible, which is the story of God and us.

So far we've covered:

Creation, in which we hear the beginning of the Story and explore questions of identity and purpose...

Catastrophe, in which we hear the story of the first humans' rejection of their identity and purpose, and the consequences of their sin for all of creation...

And last week we learned about **Covenant**, in which we hear the story of the family through whom God would begin to redeem and heal all of creation...

Today we start the first half of our next "C" word in the story of the Bible:

Community, in which we hear the story of the event that began to shape the people of God's understanding of who God is and what God is doing...

When you were a little kid, did you happen to have a favorite book that you loved to have read to you, maybe after eating dinner or before you went to sleep? Or if you can't think of your own favorite book as a kid, do your kids or grandkids or kids you've babysit have a favorite book they love to have read to them? You know, one of those books that when you read the final line to them, they look up at you with big, persuasive eyes and say, "again! again!" And you, probably having the book close to memorized, flip to the beginning of the book and start all over with "once upon a time" or something like that...hoping they'll drift off to asleep this time.

Well, one of my favorite books as a little girl was the story of **Corduroy**. Do you know this little bear's story? Oh, you'll laugh, you'll cry, and it'll leave heart all warm and tingly by the end. It's just such a sweet story. **This little bear** who has sat on a shelf for quite some time is spotted by a little girl named Lisa who wants to take him home. Her mother, though, doesn't think he's worth buying because one of his buttons is missing on his overalls. And so, when all the customers leave and all the lights are out, **he goes on a quest** to find a button to replace his missing one. He wanders the store, travels up the escalator and finally finds a button on a mattress that looks just about the right size. But when he goes to **pluck it off**, he flies off the mattress, makes a loud raucous and a huge mess, and then gets

found and returned to his shelf by the night watchman. Corduroy's night ends without the button he searched for, but drifts off to sleep on his shelf in the department store anyway. The next morning **he's awoken** by the little girl from the day before who it turns out went home, counted her own money in her piggy bank, and has come to retrieve Corduroy. **She brings** him to her home and shows him his new room and bed and when he sees it he says, "This must be home. I *know* I've always wanted a home!" And at last Corduroy gets a button for his overalls when Lisa sews one on for him. But best of all, the story ends with these words, "**You must be a friend,**" said Corduroy. 'I've always wanted a friend.' 'Me too!' said Lisa, and gave him a big hug." The end.

Again! Again! Right?! Even my little kid heart inside of me wants to hear the story again. It's such a good story!

I think without me knowing it, this story spoke to my heart as a little girl in a very real and profound way. The story of Corduroy is the story of all of us...All of us want a place to call home and all of us want to be loved. This little story about a girl and a bear she comes to call hers still makes me tear up when I read it because it speaks to a longing in my heart that is so deeply felt. The longing of all of our hearts.

The scripture that Kim/Betty read for us earlier is a very small portion of an enormously important story in the Bible. In fact, this story is the story that the Jewish people, the Israelites, wanted and needed to hear again and again – every year, in fact. They wanted to hear it again and again because it is the story of how their people were rescued from the oppression and enslavement of the Egyptians. And they needed to hear it again and again because this is the story that reminds them of who they are and whose they are. They are God's chosen people – chosen to be blessed in order to be a blessing to the world.

Last week we talked about Abraham who was chosen to be blessed in order that he and his family would be a blessing to the nations, and from that point in the Bible to the Book of Exodus when we hear this story of Moses and the Israelites, there is a span of about 400 years. So for today's purposes, we're really skipping over the amazing stories in the Bible of Isaac, for example, the son who Abraham and Sarah *finally* had, and then Jacob, Isaac's son, and then Jacob's 12 sons, one of which is Joseph – the boy who got sold into slavery by his brothers and led to Egypt. Sooner or later the whole family has to move to Egypt and that's how the Israelites wind up living in Egypt for hundreds of years. And the covenant that God promised Abraham came true – his descendant became too numerous to

count. There were so many of them that this Egyptian Pharaoh was afraid that they might take over his kingdom.

This king of Egypt, Pharaoh, was so afraid of the Israelites that he did something absolutely despicable – he ordered that all the Israelite baby boys be thrown into the Nile River to drown. Well, there was one Israelite mother who could not bear to drown her son, *but* she did in fact place her son in the Nile River. **In a** tiny, baby sized *ark* she made out of reeds. She placed him in the river and let him float away, leaving his fate in God's hands. God floated the little ark all the way down to Pharaoh's palace where **Pharaoh's daughter** found the baby boy, took him in as her own, and named him Moses, who's name literally means "one who draws out" because she drew him out of the water.

Moses grew up with the privileges of an Egyptian, but knew he was born an Israelite. Later in his life he got into some major trouble with an Egyptian which made him flee Egypt and once he was out in the wilderness of the desert, God revealed himself to Moses and called him to be the leader who would *draw God's people out* of Egypt where they were enslaved.

After refusing God's call upon his life to do such a dangerous and crazy thing, Moses finally relented to God's plan and went to Pharaoh to tell him that Moses' God says to let his people go. Pharaoh says "no" a bunch of times, even after **10 plagues fall** upon Egypt - the final plague being the worst of them all. Just as Pharaoh killed all the sons of the Israelites, with the final plague would come the death of every first born in Egypt.

But unlike Pharaoh, God provides a means of escape with the blood of a lamb, which is what our scripture lesson described earlier. **Each household who puts** the blood of the lamb over their doorway will be "passed over" and will be protected from this final plague to fall upon Egypt. This story of the Passover is and way the most formative story for the Jewish people – it defines them as God's people who God had rescued. And because Christians, are adopted into Abraham's family, it's our story, too.

Ok, so, I grew up in the 90's, yes, the 90's, and a lot of us 90's kids grew up watching a Dreamwork's cartoon movie named "The Prince of Egypt." It's honestly astounding how much this movie shaped my brain, my view and understanding of the story of Moses – which is really good for

when the movie is accurate, and not so good when Hollywood took certain liberties. Sifting through what's true and not is important in movie renditions of Bible stories... But nonetheless, this movie got a lot right. And one of the scenes that I picture in my mind every single time I read the story in the Bible is the Passover. It's powerful. I'd like to show that clip now.

Search on YouTube "Prince of Egypt Passover" or go to this link:

<https://youtu.be/HXmru6NrSAY>

The Passover. Another rescue plan. Another instance when God won't give up on His people. The people he created, the people who are so good at causing catastrophes, the people who he covenanted himself to, this same community he draws out, chooses, rescues, once again.

Ya know, while the story of Moses has much more tragedy and drama than my little Corduroy book, I have this feeling that the stories are more alike than they first seem. In the end, all of us want a place to call home and all of us want to be truly loved.

God's plan for humanity was just that when God created us. He gave Adam and Eve a place in the garden to call home and God's loving presence *perfectly* dwelled *with* them there. God made us with these core

desires: home and belonging - and gave humanity the power of choice to live with those desires met or to allow other desires to win our hearts. And so now these deep desires of our hearts, are still what we all search for. It's what Adam and Eve and Noah and Abraham and Sarah and Moses all longed for. And it's what we long for, too. As Hebrews 13:14 says, "For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come." And until our bodies die and we go to heaven or until Christ comes in final victory, we will keep knowing that this world is not our home.

And we all desire to be fully loved, and it is only God who can perfectly and wholeheartedly love us – the real us, all of us, the good, the bad, and the ugly us. Just like the Israelites in Exodus, God offers us a rescue plan because God never gives up on us. He provides a way for us, and it too, is **through the blood of the lamb** – through the blood of the One known as *the* Lamb of God – Jesus.

Jesus shed his blood on the cross to fulfill and expand the meaning of the Passover. **In fact, it was on** the very night of the Passover meal when Jesus took the unleavened bread and the cup of wine that symbolized to his people the redemption, the rescue of Israel from the Egyptians long before them, but that He was there to bring redemption once and for all.

That in His body and His blood all could find a place to call home and all could find the deepest, most real love there is - forgiveness.

Are you searching today? Are you like Corduroy when he said, "This must be home, I *know* I've always wanted a home!" While we know that this world is not our home, God desires us to make our home with him. We know this from when Jesus told his disciples in John 15:5, "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

And if you're searching for belonging - true, real, love, we can be assured by Jesus' words in John 15:9&15 that say, "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ...I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends..."

The Israelites, Jesus' disciples, Corduroy, and you and me, we're really all just trying to find a home and be loved.

Let's pray -