

The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb

As you know, over the past weeks we have been tracing the narrative of how God appeared to a wealthy 75 year-old man of Mesopotamian, and called him to go into the land that he would be shown. So off Abraham went. And in time, four generations followed in the Land of Canaan, and the tribe was driven into Egypt by a famine.

But in Egypt the people of Abraham, also known as the People of Israel, or the People of Judah, fell into slavery to the Egyptians. Centuries passed. The Israelites, the Bible tells us, laboured under a cruel slavery with broken spirits. Then God called wee baby Moses from the bull rushes into the house of Pharaoh, and a great struggle ensued between the gods of Egypt and the God of Abraham.

As we know from last week, the God of Moses prevailed over the Egyptians and on that terrible night of the Passover, the destroyer moved throughout all of Egypt slaying every first-born of man and animals.

In our Sunday School theology, our prim and tidy notions of life with God that we have constructed for our own comfort, we might have thought that when deliverance came all was now just victory and happiness.

The reality was far more troubling and dark. For the Egyptian, an unspeakable tragedy of death had befallen them due to their Pharaoh's intransigence. The Israelites are suddenly liberated, yes, but in trauma over having to flee their homes in a single night. This is not a prim and tidy story – this is life with God.

And ...*they set out from Succoth, and camped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day... and in a pillar of fire by night* (Ex 13:20). And just as the realization of liberation was upon them, and their hearts began to rejoice, and relief mixed with terror on the edge of the wilderness, they looked back.

As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them (Ex 14:10). And they asked Moses why he had brought them out this far just to fall the the swords of the Egyptians in the wilderness? And so we come to our story of the Red Sea today.

In 1985 I had the privilege of hearing Gardner C. Taylor preach on our passage for the day, the parting of the Red Sea. Rev. Taylor was known as the "Dean of Black American Preachers." He passed away in 2020 at the age of 96. He was considered by many to be the poet laureate of Protestantism.

He delivered the best sermon I've ever heard on the occasion of Martin Luther King Jr. Day at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena. I've never forgotten it – and all the more poignantly so, because of the struggle for civil rights that informed Rev. Taylor's reading of the Exodus story, and the painful path to equality still unfolding with such resistance 20 years after the passage of the Civil Rights Bill.

The message was entitled *The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb*, a quotation of Revelation 15:3. And Rev. Taylor told the story of the Israelites pursued by the army of Egypt, and pillars of cloud and fire, and the deliverance of that remarkable day – the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham so many centuries before.

And when they had crossed the Red Sea and the Egyptians were swept away, Ex 15:1 tells us they sang the Song of Moses, ***I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and rider thrown into the sea.***

And then Rev. Taylor drew our attention to that remarkable text of the consummation of history in Revelation, where, beside the Sea of Glass on the last day, the victors over evil sing again, the Song of Moses, but also the Song of the Lamb.

This morning I want us to simply hear the exalted texts of the escape through the Red Sea and the final victory of God. Let your heart enter into this experience and rejoice with us this morning.

The Liturgy

Song with words on slide- He Will Come and Save You (Say to those who are broken hearted, do not be afraid....)

Slide/video #1

Reader:

Exodus 14:19-31

14:19 The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them.

14:20 It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

14:21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.

14:22 The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

[Possibly the reader pauses while the slides/video go on - then the reader begins again? Maybe the music again plays quietly as the congregation contemplates the images?]

Reader:

14:23 The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers.

14:24 At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic.

14:25 He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

14:26 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers."

Song interlude with words on slide- Battle Belongs (When all I see is the battle, you see my victory...) or The Battle Belongs to the Lord (In heavenly armor we'll enter the land)

Slide/video # 2

Reader:

14:27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea.

14:28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained.

14:29 But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

14:30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

14:31 Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

Song interlude with words on slide— Shout to the Lord (all the earth let us sing...)

Slide/video #3

Reader:

Psalm 114

114:1 When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,

114:2 Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion.

114:3 The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back.

114:4 The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs.

114:5 Why is it, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back?

114:6 O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs?

114:7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the God of Jacob,

114:8 who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.

Song interlude – House of the Lord (We worship the God who is, we worship the God who was...)

Slide/video #4

Reader:

Exodus 15:1-11, 20-21

15:1 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.

15:2 The LORD is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

15:3 The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name.

15:4 "Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea; his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea.

15:5 The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone.

15:6 Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power-- your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy.

15:7 In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries; you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble.

15:8 At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.

15:9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'

15:10 You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

15:11 "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?"

Song interlude with words on slide - Lord Most High (From the ends of the earth...) or Ancient of Days (Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto the ancient of days...)

15:20 Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing.

15:21 And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

Song interlude – I will sing unto the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously or some other song?

Slide/video #5

Reader:

As the centuries fled away after the days of Moses, the people of Israel possessed the Land, grew their kingdom to an empire under David and Solomon, and then slowly they lost their land, their temple and seemingly their promise. Oh, the temple rose once again, but Israel was never to regain her independence and empire. One day, in an obscure village in Roman-occupied Palestine, a Messiah arose and proclaimed the Kingdom of God had come. Yet, even this hope was soon dashed as the Romans crucified the Messiah and scattered the believers. But he rose again, they said. And his church carried the good news to all the world. In the Book of Revelation the consummation of all things finally arrives.

[maybe another narrator's voice for this paragraph - sort of a change up from the voice reading the texts?]

Revelation 15:2-4

And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mixed with fire and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. ³ And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:

“Great and amazing are your deeds,

 Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways,

 King of the nations!^[a]

⁴ Lord, who will not fear

 and glorify your name?

For you alone are holy.

 All nations will come

 and worship before you,

for your judgments have been revealed.”

Closing Song- You are God Alone or God of Wonders or Forever (Give thanks to the Lord...)

Benediction