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Last Sunday we concluded a short series on the character of Daniel and I felt there was so much more to learn about him. Today we embark on a larger than life person, who is **MOSES**. After Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his favourite son Joseph, the one of multicoloured coat fame, the line goes cold, until we surface in the book of Exodus (I wish they had named it something else because the name gives away the plot!).

The history of the world God has planned, is the history of salvation: every situation, incident and person in this book is enacting the story of salvation. Our favourite Psalm 23, captures the essence of the story of salvation. *The Lord my God provides all I ever need: Like a loving, caring shepherd, He leads me to the best pasture land and feeds me on lush green meadows, and gives me rest beside peaceful streams. I am not afraid even when I walk through darkest of valleys where the shadow of death surrounds me, because I know, Your truncheon and your shepherd staff, protect and comfort me. Those who try to harm and destroy me with words and actions, will be shocked when they see me feeding at Your sumptuous banquet table, and they will be seething with jealousy when you anoint my head with oil. Here in this life on this earth, my cup overflows with Your blessings, because Your goodness and your unfailing love pursue me all the days of my life. Then, when it is over, I will spend eternity with You, in Your home!*

The entire Bible is full of God's story of salvation and we must read it as such.

So where do we place the story of Exodus? Scholars have calculated that the time from Abraham's call to Jacob's entry into Egypt (70 of them) was 215 years. When God revealed to Abraham, His plan and purpose in moving him, He said, *Your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years.*¹

True to His Word, we read in Exodus 12, *The people had lived in Egypt for 430 years. In fact, it was on the last day of the 430th year that all of Lord's forces left the land.*² We are jumping ahead of our story, but this is only to give you a time fix.

¹ Genesis 15:13ff

² Exodus 12:40-41

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As we delve into the life of Moses, let's remind ourselves of our objective, to learn how God shapes his character and uses the circumstances of Moses' life, for His planned purpose.

The book of Exodus is arguably the most important book in the Bible. As a historical narrative, the events surrounding the "Exodus" of a people known as the descendants of Jacob, this and three subsequent books³, present the defining features of this peoples' identity: saved from death and extinction by famine, prospered for a while in a foreign land, entered into a period of extreme hardship, and a series of miracles helped them to escape. God made a binding covenant with them and helped them become a sustainable community, by giving them guidelines, which if they followed, would enjoy His favour forever.

This people, the "descendants of Jacob", become known by Jacob's God-given name - Israel: *one who wrestles with God*.

Like Jacob, all of us, we God's select people, we wrestle with God, in some way or the other: not to know God's Word is to wrestle with Him; to doubt and not take God seriously is to wrestle with Him; to define God as a person He is not, is to wrestle with him; to live life without consideration of what God has planned, is to wrestle with Him. **ANYTHING** we say or do which is not in line with God's meticulous plan, is to wrestle with God.

There are two lessons to learn from Moses' life, in the text today.

The first is this, we can wrestle with God all we want, but at the end of the day, with or without us, God succeeds. A new king in Egypt is envious of the prosperity of the people of Israel, and circulates fake news about their loyalty.

When a leader sets the tone from the top, people follow; the Egyptians feel encouraged to make slaves of the Israelites to stop them growing.

The greater the hardship imposed on them, the more they grew in number, and this cycle continued - ruthless demands without mercy, yet they continued to grow in number.

³ Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

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The Pharaoh's paranoia grows. He instructs Hebrew midwives to kill baby boys, but in their hearts they refuse, "because (they) feared God".

This is the human history of persecution - every time God's people are persecuted, He provides people to rescue them. Many of you will remember Corrie ten Boom, the young Dutch girl who hid Jews in the attic of their home; like her there are so many in every stage of human history when persecution takes place, who provide rescue, comfort, even "A Hiding Place".

The Pharaoh becomes delusional; he is obsessed with reducing the number of Hebrew people in his land and now he orders "*all his people*" to throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile.

The second lesson we learn about Moses from today's text is, every life is meticulously planned by God. We can accept God's plan, or we end up wrestling with God.

God chose Moses' parents, trusted his mother's discernment to know the boy was a special child, relied on her bravery to keep the baby boy hidden for three months, and God had faith in her courage to place the baby boy in a well prepared, waterproof *coracle* and set him on the water among the reeds. The fact that she asked her elder daughter to keep an eye on what would happen, speaks of her trust in God, that this special child would be protected by Him who gave life to the boy.

This is the **partnership** God wants from us. To each and every one of us, He has gifted, given skills and talents; no one is left out; and He expects us to partner with Him by:

- using the skills God has given us, God will do His part in granting success.
- respecting God's laws and values, and He will take care of the details to follow.

What happens next, is proof that God's sense of humour is beyond compare! The king who wanted all Hebrew boys killed and drowned in the Nile at birth, has a daughter who is as compassionate as he is cruel. Not only is she moved with tenderness and mercy when she sees a baby

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in the bullrushes, she agrees to pay a wet nurse (who happens to be the baby's mother!), then adopts the boy as her own son!

As if that were not enough, she names the boy Moses, which sounds like the Hebrew word, *to lift out of the water!* What a prophetic name!

The princess named the boy for she had done for him - "*I lifted him out of the water*", but God is Sovereign and the name is fitting for the man whom God used to rescue 5 million people through waters lifted on either side, to safety on the other side.

Before Moses' birth and through his birth and infancy narrative, we see God set the stage of what is to come! His elder sister, who stood guard at a distance, who brokered the deal with the Egyptian Princess to have a wet nurse to "*nurse the baby for you*", is Miriam who leads the women in singing the song of victory after they safely crossed the Red Sea.⁴

We also discover how God placed Moses, a Hebrew, in the palace of the king as an adopted son of the king's daughter, a relationship which was pivotal in giving Moses direct access to the Pharaoh, demanding him, ***Let my people go!***

We might be tempted to think, *Well, that was Moses and that was Daniel. I am not like them!* Daniel was of princely descent and used of God; Moses was of priestly descent and used of God!

Even as I encourage you to read the book of Exodus as we journey through it, I also encourage you to look back on your life and examine periods when things did not make sense; when despite a mistake, a simple error in judgment, a misguided thought, a misinformed decision, you found yourself safely through the worst, landing on both feet on the other side of danger, to ask God to show you how He took care of you (*cf:* Footprints in the Sand). Then seek His forgiveness for not acknowledging His acts of mercy and love, which He grants even before you finish your sentence (*cf:* prodigal son)⁵ and make up your mind to walk closer to Him.

Perhaps, you might also look up the origins of your name and see how God used you to fulfil His plans! **AMEN**

⁴ Exodus 15:20-21

⁵ Luke 15