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Last Sunday we resumed our journey with Moses, picking up the story where God planned the deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt, starting them on a 40-year journey to freedom in a land God promised Abraham, where his descendants would live in peace. They left Egypt leaving behind a life of slavery, but it took 40 years in the wilderness to get slavery out of them, and let them think as free people!

We discover, in every age, including our generation today, God acts in keeping with His character: only God is able to keep His Word; we can, therefore, trust Him to keep His promises.

There are three films which depict the story of "Exodus". First was Cecil DeMille's mid-1950s film starring Charlton Heston, *Ten Commandments*; the second is Leon Uris' book starring Paul Newman, and the third was released in 2014 starring Sigourney Weaver and Ben Kingsley. Of the three, the first is closest to the original text.

Last Sunday we left Moses telling the people of Israel to prepare for deliverance, by marking the lintel on their door with the blood of a lamb. We noted, it was neither the Lamb nor its blood which saved them; it was their obedience to do what was asked, which saved them.

The disciple John grasped this Truth when he said, "*God loved the world so much that He surrendered His only Son to death the cross, so that every one who **believes** in Him shall not be lost by death, but will enter eternal life*". God sent His Son Jesus to rescue the whole world from being lost to death; only those who believe Jesus came to see them from eternal death, and live by this Truth, shall inherit eternal life in God's Kingdom.

The people of Israel left Egypt as fast as they could. They reached the shores of the Red Sea, found themselves hemmed in by the sea in front of them, the mountains behind them, and Pharaoh's army in hot pursuit!<sup>1</sup>

Moses' first real test of leadership came when Egypt's powerful army caught up with them. The people shouted at Moses, *Why did you bring us here? To die?! ... It was better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 14:1-4

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 14:

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One of the main lessons we learn from Moses' life is, **God will never ask us to do something, He does not empower us to do!** After Moses argued with God about not being the best person for the job, God said to Him, *Now, go to Pharaoh and perform all the miracles I have empowered you to do!*<sup>3</sup> It doesn't matter whether you are young or old, rich or poor, God will never ask us to do something, He has not empowered us to do.<sup>4</sup>

**WHY?** Because what God empowers us to do, always points to His glory - *that you and the world will know, that I AM God.* We ask God for proof, and He provides the proof! He licences us, He empowers us to perform His miracles, but not everyone wants to accept people whom God empowers, and that's where the problem lies!

Let's join the story of the Exodus of God's people.

One month after their miraculous escape from Egypt, the whole community of Israel complained about Aaron and Moses, *If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt! There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted (really?). Now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death.*<sup>5</sup> That was their complaint!

There is an interesting study done on **memory** which suggests that all memory is short-term by nature, that *"stable memorization sometimes required further repetitions of the series."*<sup>6</sup> In other words, to make the details of an event remain in memory as vividly as when it happened, requires regular repeating; the more frequently we repeat the details, the clearer they remain in our minds! Singing hymns is one way of repeating the story of God and His plans!

The Psalms implore God to **remember** His promises, remember His people, as if God were human like us, forgetting what He said and promised to do. The real reason we implore God to remember His promises, His words and deeds, is not to remind Him, rather to remind ourselves what He has done!

Psalm 106 is a powerful recital of God's actions, a reminder of the details of what God had done. *Our ancestors in Egypt were not impressed by the Lord's*

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<sup>3</sup> Exodus 4:21

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 4:21

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 16:3

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2657600/>

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*miraculous deeds. They soon forgot his many acts of kindness to them.*<sup>7</sup> God is distrusted because his favours are not remembered.

30-days after they witnessed first-hand, God's miraculous power to save, they discredit Him, that God's power had no mercy in it. But was it not God's mercy that set in motion the sequence of events that delivered them from slavery?

We cannot separate God's power from His mercy. It is because of His mercy towards us, that God shows His power to deliver us and keep us safe.

The Psalmist constantly reminds himself of the indisputable nature of **mercy** in God's character:

*You, O Lord are a God full of compassion, gracious, long-suffering and abundant in **mercy** and truth.*<sup>8</sup>

*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; **mercy** and truth go before Your face.*<sup>9</sup>

*The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and **great in mercy**. The Lord is good to all, and His **tender mercies** are over all His works*<sup>10</sup>

God made a promise that He would deliver His people out of Egypt **with a mighty hand**, not to show off His power, but as an act of mercy, what the people then could not do for themselves!

They could not fulfil God's promise to Abraham, *I will make you into a great nation. ... And all the families on earth will be blessed through you!*<sup>11</sup> But God remembered the time had come to fulfil this promise!

You see, *the whole community of Israel* were guilty of three things which caused them to complain they did not have enough food:

1. They stopped singing and remembering the mighty act of God's deliverance, and slipped very quickly into complaining mode. They were not reinforcing their memory, with the details of what God had done.

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<sup>7</sup> Psalm 106:7

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 86:15

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 89:14

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 145:8-9

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 12:2-3

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2. As a result they anticipated the worst: mass starvation. They did not experience weeks and weeks of hunger, nor did they see their family and friends die of malnutrition. They imagined a better life, started to feel hungry and anticipated starvation.
3. Finally, they did what most people who complain do: they twisted the narrative of the past to support their complaining: *in Egypt, we sat by pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full!* They looked down on their imagined misery, not looking up at the God of mercy and love. They lost sight of God's future for them.

You see, the significance of what God did for the people He chose, through whom He wanted to bless the whole world, for all generations, Jesus reminded us when He taught us to pray: *Give us this day our **daily bread!*** Jesus opens our minds to the real meaning: it's not about Bread which does not spoil, ***its about trusting God daily, to provide all we need to go through that day, physical, spiritual and emotional!***

Moses wants the people of Israel to learn God's True character, as He is learning. *Our God is not like the gods of Egypt whom you experienced for 400 years.* God says to Moses, *You will know [through experience] that I am The Lord God who is merciful.*<sup>12</sup>

Let's close with the prophet Micah's description of God's character:

*Is another God like you, who pardons the guilt of the remnant, overlooking the sins of his special people? You will not stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing unfailing love. Once again you will have compassion and mercy on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean!*<sup>13</sup>

Ask yourself this question: ***Was there any other reason for God to send His Son Jesus to die such a horrific death on the cross?***

**AMEN.**

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<sup>12</sup> Exodus 16:12

<sup>13</sup> Micah 7:18-19 New Living Translation (NLT)