

Title: God promises redemption
Text: Exodus 5-6

September 8, 2019
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Most of you know this about me, but before I moved to Indiana, I lived in Kentucky. And oftentimes when that gets brought up, people try to make fun of me and make redneck jokes about how backwards people in Kentucky are. Usually I try my best to refute them, but I saw a new report from Kentucky this week, and I had to respond. Take a look.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=31&v=JWdoUY5IgrE Now that's not a fair representation of the entire state, but there are parts of Kentucky where that accent and that culture are completely normal. And because that's what everyone does, no one knows any different. When you have been surrounded by a certain culture, and you only know one way of life, it's hard to appreciate that there is a world outside of you that exists.

Take that truth and think what it would have been like to be the Israelites in Egypt. They had been in slavery for 430 years. Slavery was all they had ever known. They had never tasted a day of freedom in their lives. No choice on education. No choice on vocation. No days off. No vacations. No personal savings. No autonomy. No liberty. All those things we value so much, they knew nothing about. But as we saw last week, all of that is about to change. God has revealed himself through the burning bush. God has called Moses to return to Egypt and set his people free.

Somewhat reluctantly, Moses signs up. He goes back to Egypt, and before going to the palace to meet with Pharaoh, he goes to the leaders of the Israelites. We see this in 4:29-31 **Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, and Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people** (the staff turning into a snake, his hand turning leprous and then turning back again), **31 and they believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.** So Moses goes to people who had been slaves their entire lives. All their parents had known was slavery. All their grandparents had known was slavery. All their great-grandparents had known was slavery. When we talk about being slaves for 430 years, for perspective, it has been 399 years since the pilgrims first landed on Plymouth Rock. For these people in Egypt, slavery has been their entire existence. And then Moses and his brother show up, show them these signs, and tells them that God wants to set them free. And what do they do? **They bow down and worshiped.** They are elated, overwhelmed with gratitude. This is literally the best news they've ever heard.

So the people are on board, and they want to be free. The only other person who has to sign off on this is Pharaoh. **5:1-2 Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'"** Presumably they assumed that since God said he was going to deliver them, it was going to be easy and instantaneous, that Pharaoh was going to let them go right away. This is God, after all, who decreed their freedom, right?! They were in for quite a surprise: **Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go."** This is a really important question that we will circle back to at the end of the message. Pharaoh asks, "**Who is the Lord?**" There were a lot of

different gods in Egypt (From archeology and hieroglyphics, we know there were about 80 in all.) that the people worshipped. And Pharaoh himself was one of the deities; people worshipped him. Pharaoh is thinking, "If you want to know which god you should offer sacrifices, which god you should hold a festival to honor - Here I am! Bow down and worship me."

And we see two interesting responses by Pharaoh: First in verse 5 he says: **"Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working."** Like any real slave master, he doesn't care for them. He is not interested in what he can do for them and how he can serve them. He is only interested in what they can do for him, what he can get out of them, how he can exploit them. Next, look at 5:6-8 **That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: 7 "You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. 8 But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out."** Pharaoh says, "You want to ask for freedom. How about more labor?! Instead of losing his grip, Pharaoh tightened his fist. Look at verse 12-14 **12 So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw. 13 The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, "Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw." 14 And Pharaoh's slave drivers beat the Israelite overseers they had appointed, demanding, "Why haven't you met your quota?"** So here is what we see. God's people heard a message of hope and freedom: "God wants to set you free." They set their hearts on freedom. They wanted liberty and autonomy. It seemed like such a great promise that they could taste it. But just as soon as they began to believe it was possible, Pharaoh slammed the door in their face and punished them for even having that dream.

Here's where I think this matters so much; here's why I think that matters today. As we read the story of God's people in Exodus, remember, this is our story. What we read in this book, we experience in our lives. This is like a template that can be set over every generation, every culture. We've not been in bondage in Egypt, but spiritually and emotionally speaking, we know what it's like to be enslaved. We know what it's like to have a master that refuses to let us go, no matter how many times we set our hope on deliverance.

-How many have been enslaved to lust and sexual temptation for as long as you can remember? You've made so many promises about how this is going to be the very last time...but just a few days later, you're back in bondage again.

-How many have been slaves to greed? You are always thinking about how to get more, how to win, grab the next dollar. You can't remember the last time you were simply grateful, content and at rest. Just like the rich young ruler who wanted to follow Jesus and Jesus said sure, but first renounce your material possessions. Give up your greed and then come and walk in relationship with God. And he just couldn't let it go. He looked at his bank account and thought, "I have so many things." No. Those things had him. He was a slave. And he's not alone. Greed affects so many of us.

-For others it's alcohol. You've been drinking almost every day for as long as you can remember. Do you want a really easy way to figure out if you have a struggle with alcohol? Really easy. Has anyone in your life ever told you that you have a struggle with alcohol? If

they've said it, it's probably true. And when you really think about it, you want to be free. But comfort through a bottle is all you have ever known.

-For others it is pride. This one is so blinding. People can be slaves to pride their entire lives and never know it. Pride wraps people up in themselves. You are always mindful of your image. Everything is a competition. You are always aware of how you rank and compare to others. You need people's approval and respect. Pride is an oppressive taskmaster.

-For others it is fear. You are gripped by anxiety. There is this constant state of worry in your heart. Sometimes it's at the back of your mind and you can almost ignore it, but more often than not it's at the front of your mind and it's debilitating. You don't know how to put your finger on it, but there are times you can't eat, times you can't sleep, times you cancel on friends, times you just can't show up to work - fear has control of your life.

We've not been slaves in Egypt, but we know about bondage. Pharaoh has not squeezed the life out of us, but something has. And yet we come to church and just like the people in this passage we are told, "God has seen you. God has heard you. God has come down to rescue you and set you free." And like the people in this passage we get excited. We are elated. We're hopeful. We've wanted this for so long. But as soon as we take a step toward freedom, what happens? Our former master doesn't just open his arms and say: "Sure, you are welcome to go whenever you want. You're free." No, the grip tightens and the claws are sunk in deeper than ever. It's like our enemy is saying: "Don't you even think about it." He breaks our back and tells us to make bricks without straw. He reminds us of how much power he has over us. We want to be free. We have that hope and dream in our hearts, but the bondage is undeniable, and it feels like we'll never escape.

It is so natural and common for us to assume that if we believe in God, and if we are committed to following him, and if we believe in his promises and power, all of a sudden everything is going to go well for us. Every obstacle is going to be removed. Every chain is going to break. Every wall is going to fall down. No more difficult conversation with the mechanic because our cars are always going to run perfectly. No more difficult conversations with doctors because our bodies are always going to work perfectly. No more difficult conversations with our spouse or kids because our families are always going to be perfect, too.

That is not how life works. That is not how God works. And if that is our expectation, we are in for a world of disappointment. The Israelites came with unrealistic expectations. God promised to deliver them. They thought it was going to be instantaneous and easy. They thought God was going to snap his fingers and like a genie in a bottle: Poof. It's reality. God had something different in mind. God has something better in mind. It was going to take time. It was going to require patience and trust. But God was going to set them free in such a way that they would never return to Egypt again. He was going to set them free in such a way that God's power and supremacy would be known by generation after generation for thousands of years to come. He was going to set them free in a way that judged those who had oppressed them all those years. That was God's plan, but because it didn't happen in the way and time that the Israelites expected, they began to question God's plan, to doubt his love and goodness. And they take their anger and disappointment out on Moses and Aaron? And they say things would have been better

for us if you never showed up. Moses then goes to God and says” Why have you done this? You haven’t rescued your people, you’ve made it worse for them. What’s going on? And to that question, God gives this answer:

6:1 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.” 2 God also said to Moses, “I am the Lord. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself fully known to them. 4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they resided as foreigners. 5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. 6 “Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. 7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.’”

Did you see how God responded to Moses’ question? **God reminded Moses of his power, of his intimate relationship, and of his faithfulness.** I want to spend the rest of our time unpacking each of those aspects. First, let’s talk about **His power.** The Lord said: **Because of my mighty hand Pharaoh will let them go; because of my mighty hand Pharaoh will drive them out of his country.”** God is reminding Moses that though it may look like Pharaoh is in charge, it is actually God who has all the power in the world. There is nothing too great for him. Sometimes, as God’s people, we need to be reminded of his power.

This summer I was with my buddy Jeremy and his boys on a lake. That’s me and Hudson. That’s Jeremy surfing and his two boys, Davis and Hill. Davis is a little more cautious by nature. Hill is a little more daring. Jeremy told me a story about getting pulled over for speeding. As he was talking with the officer, Davis began to sob. He broke down in intense tears and kept saying, “They’re going to take daddy to jail. They are going to take daddy to jail.” He was a complete mess. Hill looked at his older brother and said, “Don’t worry, Davis. If they take daddy to jail, he’ll just rip the bars off and walk out.” Now, that’s the confidence of a little boy in his dad. That’s scratching the surface of the type of confidence we should have in God. He is the one who spoke and formed the galaxies. Isaiah 40:12 says he measured out the oceans in the palm of his hands. Imagine that! Gulf of Mexico. Pacific Ocean. Far more importantly, God displayed his power in the life, death, and resurrection of his Son. And when you pause to consider the power of God displayed on the cross and the empty tomb, you’ll quickly realize that no matter what hardship you might be facing, no matter what oppression you may be staring down, God’s power is more than sufficient. There is nothing he cannot do. And so we would be wise to remember the well known saying: **What matters is not the strength of your faith, but the strength of the God your faith is in.**

God reminded Moses of his power and of his **intimate relationship.** Look at 6:2-3 **God also said to Moses, “I am the Lord. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God**

Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself fully known to them. This is quite the statement. **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** are the patriarchs. They are the ones God made an initial covenant with. They are the ones God swore a promise to. Abraham is the father of faith. He was called “a friend of God.” And yet there were parts of God they didn’t know anything about. They knew that he was **God almighty**. They knew his power and strength, but they didn’t know his personal name. God is looking to the Israelites and saying, I want you to know me more personally and more intimately than the forefathers of the faith, I want you to know me better than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God tells them his name. “**The LORD**” This is the personal name of God. The Hebrew translation is Yahweh. When you are reading the Bible and see The LORD in all capital letters, this is the translator’s way of letting you know that this is God’s personal name. To this day, it is considered so sacred by the Hebrew people that they wouldn’t even pronounce it. This is God’s way of saying, “I want you to know me.” And if that’s what he did for them, think of all the greater ways he has done that for us.

I think about this in regards to a man named John the Baptist. John the Baptist was Jesus’ cousin. He prepared the way for Jesus. He was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth. He even baptized Jesus. And one time, Jesus spoke about his cousin, John the Baptist, and said this: “**Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.**” Matthew 11:11. Think about that. John is greater than everyone who came before him. Greater than Abraham, greater than Moses. Greater than David. Greater than Isaiah and Ezekiel and Jeremiah. John is the greatest of them all. Then what does he say??? “**Yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**” Matthew 11:11 How can that be? How can John be greater than everyone who came before him, but you and I be greater than him? How can we be greater than all the saints and prophets and holy people we read about in the Bible? The answer is simple: We have a more intimate relationship with God than any of them. We not only know God’s personal name, we know his Son, Jesus Christ. We don’t just see his Spirit working among us. He has his Spirit living inside of us.

What an incredible encouragement. We are not only reminded of his power, but of his intimate relationship. And then last: God reminds Moses of his **faithfulness**. In 6:6-8 he makes four promises.

Liberation: “I will set you free.”

Redemption: “I will redeem you”

Adoption: “I will take you as my own people”

Inheritance: “I will give you the Promised Land”

These are such incredible promises. And God actually brackets the promises by signing his name at the beginning and the end. Look in your Bibles. 6:6 Begins with “**I am the Lord**” and verse 8 ends with “**I am the Lord.**” God is saying. You can count on it. I swear by myself to do it. I will set you free, I will redeem you. I will make you my own people. I will give you the land of promise.

Now if the Israelites could cling to those promises for hope, encouragement, and certainty, how much more can we? Because Jesus has already fulfilled each of these promises to us in the ultimate way by sending Jesus to die on the cross. The Scriptures say that it was not with

perishable things such as silver or gold that we were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to us from our forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ. The Scriptures say, "How great is the Love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God." And we are not promised land as a possession; we are promised heaven. We are promised eternal life and a never-ending relationship with God and each other.

God has promised redemption. And even if it hasn't come about in the exact time or exact way we might expect, we can have confidence in our God! He is powerful. We have an intimate relationship with him, and he will be faithful to fulfill every promise he has ever made. As we keep reading in Exodus, on the very next page he declares war on the false gods and power and principles that have held his people in bondage. He fights for his people, and he wins the battle. He sets them free. Then, after bringing them out of Egypt, God begins to get the Egypt out his people. He calls them to set aside all their former commitments and devotions, and sets them apart for him, and him alone. God promised redemption. And God brought about redemption. He did it for them. And he will do it for us.