

You Shall Know I AM:

The Making of a Deliverer (Exodus 2:11-25)

Preached by Pastor Jason Tarn at HCC on August 26, 2018

Introduction

- ❖ Last week we began a new sermon series through the book of Exodus. It started with a reminder of how God's people ended up in Egypt, and how they came to be enslaved. And then we looked at the events surrounding the birth of Moses, who would one day be used by God to deliver the Israelites from their bondage.
 - But in today's passage, he's still has a ways to go. He's not ready. He's got the heart. He's got the zeal. **But Moses's actions just go to prove – that when you're trying to help people in need – good intentions are not enough.** Until you're ready to be the deliverer that God intends you to be, your well-intentioned efforts to help might actually do more harm than good.

- ❖ I think that's such a relevant lesson for us to learn. **Because I know many of you have a heart to help – especially people in need.** I see you caring for your fellow church members – those who are physically ill, those who are financially burdened, those who are emotionally hurt or spiritually depressed. You're carrying each others burdens.
 - **And beyond our own members, I see many of you with a heart for the hurting in our city.** I've been encouraged over the years at the Compassion Projects that our members have initiated – rallying people together under a common goal to serve the poor and needy or the weak and marginalized. Over the years, you've helped low income families, the victims of sex trafficking, the homeless population, the weary refugees, the neglected elderly, and the invisible unborn. I praise God for all that.

- ❖ For those of you new to our church, I know I'm biased but I think you've found an amazing group of people to be around. **These are people whose hearts break when they see others being mistreated. They're uncomfortable when societal evils and injustices are ignored and unaddressed.** There is a growing social awareness among us as Christians – as we're taking steps of faith to go out of our circles (out of our bubbles), in order to help those who are crying out for help.
 - Now I realize that might not describe all of us. For some of us, it'll be good to be challenged to take greater steps of faith outside of our comfort zones and to draw closer to those who are suffering. That's an immediate application for many of us that we'll come back to later.

- ❖ But I want to speak in particular to those of you who feel so “woke”, and you're chomping at the bit to go out there and make a difference. I say let this morning's passage serve as a reminder that your good intentions are not enough. **Moses's first attempt to be the deliverer that he thought God wanted him to be ended in disaster and exile.** He tried to help the hurting. He tried to face down societal evils and injustices. But he learned the inevitable outcome of the mess you make when you take matters into your own hands.
 - **Church, we if we want to avoid doing more harm than good, then our well-intentioned efforts at helping the hurting have to remain rooted and centered in gospel.** That the lesson to be learned in our passage. And it might surprise you since we're in the Old Testament.

❖ But as we stressed last week, Exodus is more than a story about God’s faithfulness to a people in the past. **It’s an illustration of the spiritual condition of people today who are trapped in bondage, and it pictures our great need of deliverance, which can only be accomplished by God's own hands .**

- This is how I’m going to break down our passage and it's the point of our message: Those who want to help others in need need to learn three things: 1) to help by not taking matters into your own hands, 2) to help by identifying with others in their suffering, and 3) to help by trusting in God and his hands to ultimately deliver.

Learning To Help By Not Taking Matters Into Your Own Hands

❖ So one of the first lessons that Moses learns is that if he really wants to help his people, then he can’t take matters into his own hands. That’s essentially what he tries to do in vv11-14. There’s a big time gap between vv10 to 11. We learn from Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 that Moses was 40 years old when the events in our passage take place (cf. Acts 7:23). **So for forty comfortable and privileged years, Moses grew up shielded from the suffering and slavery experienced by his people.** He was an Israelite, but he had the good fortune to grow up as a prince of Egypt.

- But beginning in v11, Moses steps out of his circle, his bubble, his comfort zone, and it says, “*he went out to his people (literally, to his brothers) and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people (brothers).*” Now what’s interesting is how that verb for “he went out”(yasa) is the same verb that later on in the book will describe the exodus (cf. 6:6). So Moses’s “going out” from the Egyptians serves as a foreshadow of Israel’s future “going out”.

❖ **And once he went out from what was comfortable and familiar, he saw his people’s burdens, and it moved him emotionally.** First, notice that he’s aware of his true identity as an Israelite. As we saw last week, he was still raised by his birth mother during his early childhood who would've explained his background, and it wouldn't surprise me if his adopted mother, a princess of Egypt, would tell him the story of how she found and adopted him. So by age 40, though he’s probably had little interaction with the Hebrews, he does recognize them as his brothers.

- And when we finally sees their suffering, he’s moved. **That verb (yara) that describes him looking on the burdens of his people carries a connotation that suggests more than simply seeing something – but seeing something with an emotional attachment or involvement.** A clear example of his nuance can be found in Genesis 21:16 where Hagar is described as unable to “look” at her son who is suffering and about to die of thirst. It’s not that she can’t physically look at him but emotionally it hurt too much.
 - So similarly, when Moses finally sees his brothers being unjustly beaten and burdened by the very people he grew up with – something awoke in his soul. **The beating he witnessed was more than just eye-opening. For Moses, it was conscience-raising.** He became burdened for his brethren.

- ❖ Do you know this burden? Have you felt it? **Again, I want to challenge those of us (and I include myself) who have grown up with privilege like Moses.** For the most part, we've been sheltered from the suffering of our brethren – which is really any human being created in the image of God. And nothing is going to change without some intentionality.
 - **You're going to have to go out and look at suffering with your own eyes, and pray for God to burden your conscience with the burdens of your brethren.** Now we're going to try to help you be intentional. We're developing new outreach and community service teams that will be led by new English deacons starting in 2019. We already have initiatives going on, but we're hoping to provide more opportunities for you to go out and look upon the suffering in our city for yourself.

- ❖ But let's keep looking at Moses and how he responded to the suffering and injustices that he witnessed. It's clear from v11 that Moses cares a lot about justice and can't stand to see people mistreated. And in v13, he definitely has the heart of a peacemaker, trying to reconcile people who are at each other's throats. So no one can question his heart for others. **But his problem was that he took matters into his own hands, and he tried to deliver his people in his own way – by the means he deemed best.**

- ❖ Look in v12. It's not clear if Moses intended to kill the Egyptian, but it's clear he intended to do violence because it says he looked around to make sure no one was there before striking. And once he killed the man, he tried to cover it up by literally covering the body in sand.
 - **Now we're not given a peek into Moses's thought process here in Exodus, but fortunately we are in the book of Acts.** We believe that Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture, so we can turn to **Acts 7:23** to help us understand Exodus 2. And in his speech, Stephen explains that, *“²³When [Moses] was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. ²⁴And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand.”*
 - So Moses believed himself to be God's instrument of salvation for his people and that *“by his hand”* he would deliver them from Egypt. And he wasn't completely wrong. **He will be an instrument of salvation – but an instrument wielded in God's hands.** Deliverance won't come by *his* hands but by God's – as he sovereignly uses Moses to accomplish his purposes. That's where Moses was mistaken. He took matters into his own hands instead of trusting God's.

- ❖ And the result was rejection and exile. If we keep reading in v13, Moses goes out the next day and sees two Israelites fighting, and he confronts the offender asking, *“Why do you strike your companion?”* That word for *strike* is the same word for *beat* back in v11 when the Egyptian was beating the Israelite. That's an indictment against Israel. **It suggests that their bondage – not just to Egypt but to sin – has so corrupted them that they're treating each other no better than how the Egyptians treat them.**

- ❖ But when Moses tries to point that out, they reject him. They question his leadership. Look at v14, the offender says, “*Who made you to be a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?*” **That another example of foreshadowing. Throughout Exodus, the Israelites continue to question and reject the validity of Moses’s leadership – which once again proves that their bondage goes much deeper than physical chains.**
 - Even after being liberated from slavery to Egyptian authorities, the people continue to question and reject even the good authority of God and his servants. **It shows that true deliverance is far more difficult that we imagine and something none of us can accomplish by our own hands.**

- ❖ Church, what this means for us is that our efforts to help the hurting – whether we’re dealing with people we know in our church or people we don’t know in our city – **our efforts must be carried out with the understanding that their suffering, their pain, their bondage goes much deeper than the issues you’re addressing on the surface.**
 - The pain your friend is going through because of a break up requires more than kind words of comfort. They need to recognize the deeper issues of heart contentment. The parents who are disappointed over the choices being made by their adolescent children need to see that the deeper issue is not their children’s obedience but their own fears of losing control over their kids and the direction of their lives. **Those are the heart issues that you cannot solve, that you cannot touch by your own hands.**
 - And think about the hungry man on the street – you can fill his belly, but you know there remains a deeper hunger in him that nothing coming from your hands will ever satisfy. And you can assist in the rescue and recovery of a trafficking victim, but just like the Israelites, she still remains subject to a deeper bondage that you cannot break by your own hands.

- ❖ When you take matters into your own hands – assuming that you, by your efforts, can be their deliverer – you fail to deal with the true source of their suffering, pain, and bondage. They remain in a condition where they may question and reject you, but even worse, they’ll continue to question and reject God.
 - **I know it may sound contradictory, but you can’t truly help others in need until you recognize the depths of their needs and the limitations of your hands.** You cannot be their savior. You cannot be their deliverer. That’s the lesson Moses had to first learn before he could be of any help to his people.

Learning To Help By Identifying With Others in Their Suffering

- ❖ This leads to the second lesson we can learn from our passage. As we follow Moses into exile, we learn to help others by identifying with them in their suffering. Let’s continue with the story in v15. Once it’s discovered that Moses has sided with the Israelites, he’s rejected by the Egyptian aristocracy and Pharaoh issues his death warrant. So he flees into exile into the land of Midian.

- ❖ Now again we learn from Acts 7, that his exile in Midian lasted 40 years, which is no coincidence when you consider how Israel would eventually spend 40 years wandering the wilderness because of their disobedience. **So Moses's exile can be interpreted as the consequence of his own disobedience** – for taking matters (and a life!) into his own hands.
 - Now as the story goes, he's resting at a well, when he encounters the seven daughters of the priest of Midian. They've come to draw water for their father's flock, but certain shepherds came and harassed them. Moses steps up and rescues them. That, of course, alludes to his future role as the shepherd of Israel and her future rescuer. But again he's not ready yet for that bigger task.
 - **But what this little vignette shows is that he truly does care about justice, and he's willing to stand up for the weak.** But there's a very important lesson he has to learn first, and he can only learn it by experience.

- ❖ **Moses must learn to identify with the people – and not just with their common ancestry – but with their suffering.** If you want to truly be a help to others, that's what it calls for – for you to share in their suffering. As we read on, we see that Moses is slowly identifying more and more with God's people and their suffering. Initially, he's still seen as an Egyptian. Did you notice that the daughters of Reuel describe him as an Egyptian in v19? He probably still wore the clothes and had the hairstyle or even the makeup of an Egyptian.
 - But as settles into the land of Midian, he takes for himself a Midianite wife and starts his own family, and according to Exodus 3:1, Moses takes up the profession of a shepherd, tending his father-in-law's sheep. As you may know, shepherding was the chief profession of the Israelites during their time in Egypt. **Genesis 46:34 tells us that shepherding was an abomination to the Egyptians.** It was a shameful profession, so they left it to the Israelites.

- ❖ So think about it. **Now Moses no longer sees himself as a privileged prince of Egypt. Here he is taking on the shame and adopting the identity of a shepherd.** And then, if you look in v22, he accepts the identity of a sojourner, an alien in a foreign land. Let me read v22, *“She (Moses's wife Zipporah) gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.”* The name Gershom means “an alien there”. That's how Moses sees himself in Midian. He's an alien there.
 - **The point is that Moses needs to first experience alienation in order to truly identify with God's alienated people.** He needs to suffer as a stranger in a strange land before he can truly understand and help God's people in their suffering. If you really want to help someone, then first learn to identify with them and their suffering.

- ❖ That, of course, means you can't help people from a comfortable distance. You need to draw close and get your hands dirty. That means, as a church, if we want to be a community that truly helps one another in need, then we need to open up our lives to one another. **If you need help, then you need to let others into your life, into your mess.**

- **And if you want to be a help to others, then you need to be willing to get your hands dirty into the muck and mire of their lives.** You can't save them by your own hands, but if you're willing to get your hands dirty by loving them deeply and identifying with them in their pain and suffering, then you're becoming that very instrument that God loves to use to deliver people by his own hand.

- ❖ Now before we dive into that point, let me offer **a word of encouragement for those of you who feel like you've made too many mistakes in your walk with God, too many failures in life, to be of any real help to others or any good use in the hands of God.** Some of you carry around a heavy cloud of guilt for past mistakes, and you don't think God could ever (or would ever) use you again for his good purposes.
 - **If that's how you feel, then I point to Moses as exhibit A to prove that God has no qualms with using failures and flunkies for his good purposes.** By v22, Moses has accepted his exile, and he probably thinks he's as good as done in God's plans. He had his shot and he wasted it. He failed. He's trying to move on.

- ❖ But the fact that God is not through with him ought to encourage us all – **because it demonstrates that no amount of failure or mistakes will push you so far beyond God's grace and willingness to still use you in his good plans.** You're right when you say you're not qualified. Moses is going to make that same argument later on when God calls him to go back. But as the saying goes, **"God doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies the called."**
 - Sure, you're not worthy. **But if you die to yourself and find new life in Christ, then you're counted worthy in Christ.** By faith, you receive his righteousness, his qualifications, his worthiness. If God calls you to Christ, then he qualifies you in Christ to be able to serve him and his purposes, doing good in the lives of others. Take comfort and encouragement in that promise.

Learning To Help By Trusting In God And His Hands To Deliver

- ❖ That's going to lead to our third and final lesson to learn. It's about learning to help others by not taking matters into your own hands but trusting God and his hands to ultimately deliver. This is the message that comes across in vv23-25, which sort of functions as a postscript to this chapter of Moses's life – in preparation for a new calling to come in chapter 3.
 - Let's read the whole thing again. Start with me in v23, *"²³During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. ²⁴And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵God saw the people of Israel – and God knew."*

- ❖ So during those forty years, the Pharaoh dies but his policy of oppression against God's people continues, and it says they groan and cry out to God for help. And their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. Notice how Scripture says God did four things. Starting in v24, it says God heard. God remembered. God saw. And God knew.

- How amazing is that! Our God is not a god of wood or stone that just sits there motionless, and neither is he just a figment of our imagination. **No, the God of the Bible is a personal God who hears the cries of his people, who remembers his promises to us, who sees us in our suffering, and who knows us personally and intimately.** In other words, he identifies with us!

- ❖ When it says he "*saw the people of Israel*" – he saw them with that same emotional involvement as Moses seeing his suffering people or Hagar seeing her dying son. And when it says "*God knew*" – he knew them and their suffering with the same emotional attachment. **There's this verse in Isaiah where it describes how God identifies with the suffering of his people.** It says, "*In all their affliction he was afflicted*" (Isa. 63:9). Every beating they had, he took it. Every insult they received, he felt it. Every injustice they suffered, he bore it. In all their affliction, God was afflicted.
 - And in so doing, God proved to be Israel's true Deliverer. That's the most important lesson that Moses had to learn. **He had to recognize that salvation would never come from his hands – only God's.** The next time there would be no doubt that God is the one delivering his people. It's by his hands alone, so he gets all the glory.

- ❖ Friends, this is the most important lesson for you to learn as well. **If you want to truly help the hurting, then you have to help them see that you're not their savior.** That you can't be their deliverer. No man or woman can. That's God's job. He's going to have to roll up his sleeves and take matters into his own hands.
 - I think some of you really need to hear that this morning. **I know some of you have been trying so hard to help a friend (or maybe a family member) who's currently stuck in some unhealthy patterns of behavior. And it's exhausting you.** Maybe it's an addiction they're dealing with or just some bad habits they can't seem to shake. Whatever it is – you're trying so hard to help them but you're not seeing any change. You're not even sure if they want to change. You feel like Moses. You can see they're in bondage. You want to liberate them. But nothing seems to help, and they might have even rejected you and rebuffed your efforts.

- ❖ That's why you need to learn the same lesson as Moses. **You need to stop taking matters into your own hands and to start trusting God's.** To put it all in his strong hands – put your burden for your friends, your hope that they'll change, and all your well-intentioned efforts to help. Put it all in God's hands.
 - That's the bigger story that Moses's story is trying to tell. That's how we're understanding Exodus. It's more than a story of God's deliverance in the past for one nation. **It's an illustration and template for how he brings about an ultimate deliverance for all the nations of the earth – and by his own hands.**

- ❖ **As the story goes, there was another Prince who left behind the comforts of his palace and the privileges of his station – not counting it a thing to be grasped – in order to identify with his people and their suffering.** He also embraced the role of a Shepherd and obeyed the call to bring out God's people but was also rejected by the very people.
 - And he took matters into his own hands, but unlike Moses, he had every right to – because he was God in the flesh. **And unlike Moses, he didn't try to deliver his people by taking a life but by laying down his life.** The ultimate deliverance of God's people from our sin and suffering would be accomplished by the death of his Messiah – the Son of God who died for our sins and rose again to give us new life.

- ❖ There's a reason why they call it a Messiah complex. You might say that Moses, here in chapter 2, had a Messiah complex. He was trying to be their savior. **And let's be honest, we all deal with a Messiah complex.** Even if we're not exhausting ourselves trying to be a savior to others, we find ourselves trying to save ourselves. Trying to deliver ourselves from the suffering and burdens of life that threaten to crush us.
 - **Biblical wisdom teaches us that it's the fool who refuses to learn from his own failures and from the failures of others.** So don't be the fool and refuse to learn from Moses and his first attempt at delivering God's people.
 - You can't save yourself and you can't save the hurting people in your life. But you can tell them who can. You can point them to the true Deliverer. You can tell them about Jesus and the help he freely offers – a help to be received by grace through faith.