

OCT 4 2020 ... START HERE ...



Prepare for our time together from afar

- Find a quiet and comfortable space
- Turn on some soothing instrumental music, maybe with headphones
- Consider the stillness of a lit candle
- Take 3 deep breaths and calm your mind



Pray as you are comfortable – read silently, say out loud, whisper

God, guide me through the day
God remind me of Christ's presence
Under me, over me
On my right and on my left
God, breathe in and through me

May it be so.

TIME FOR THE ANCIENT STORY

Read silently or aloud – let these ancient words tap into your imagination.

Here's the backstory for today's story :

So, we left off last week with Joseph promising his brothers he would care for them. Famine had brought the family back together in Egypt – far from their native lands.

Over 400 years passes. Jacob's sons have settled, had kids, and grown into a huge group of people – but the king of Egypt sees them as a threat to Egyptian ways of life and enslaves them.

Moses' story kicks in at the beginning of Exodus – he is rescued from the river as a baby, he is raised in the palace, he runs for his life, ends up in Midian, and settles in as a shepherd.

Then God speaks and sends him back.

Today's story takes place after a long and mighty battle of wills – the king versus God. Ten plagues take place. Each time the king refuses to free his slaves. This night – death will arrive and the Egyptians will plead for the Israelites to leave before more terror strikes.

Now for the ancient story ...

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month will be the first month; it will be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole Israelite community: On the tenth day of this month they must take a lamb for each household, a lamb per house. If a household is too small for a lamb, it should share one with a neighbor nearby. You should divide the lamb in proportion to the number of people who will be eating it. Your lamb should be a flawless year-old male. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You should keep close watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month.

At twilight on that day, the whole assembled Israelite community should slaughter their lambs. They should take some of the blood and smear it on the two doorposts and on the beam over the door of the houses in which they are eating. That same night they should eat the meat roasted over the fire. They should eat it along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Don't eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over fire with its head, legs, and internal organs. Don't let any of it remain until morning, and burn any of it left over in the morning.

This is how you should eat it. You should be dressed, with your sandals on your feet and your walking stick in your hand. You should eat the meal in a hurry. It is the Passover of the LORD.

I'll pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I'll strike down every oldest child in the land of Egypt, both humans and animals. I'll impose judgments on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be your sign on the houses where you live. Whenever I see the blood, I'll pass over you. No plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

[death comes ... the people leave Egypt ... the weird meal becomes a ritual of remembering]

The LORD said to Moses: Dedicate to me all your oldest children. Each first offspring from any Israelite womb belongs to me, whether human or animal.

Moses said to the people, "Remember this day which is the day that you came out of Egypt, out of the place you were slaves, because the LORD acted with power to bring you out of there. No leavened bread may be eaten. Today, in the month of Abib, you are going to leave. The LORD will bring you to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. It is the land that the LORD promised your ancestors to give to you, a land full of milk and honey. You should perform this ritual in this month. You must eat unleavened bread for seven days. The seventh day is a festival to the LORD. Only unleavened bread should be eaten for seven days. No leavened bread and no yeast should be seen among you in your whole country. You should explain to your child on that day, 'It's because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.'

You might want to watch the movie, [The Prince of Egypt](#), to get a glimpse of the entire story of Moses ...

- Exodus 12:1-13 and 13:1-8 CEB

SO WHAT NOW?

Read silently or aloud – some thoughts on this story

Maybe you've seen some of the stuff on the news about Black Lives Matter or how our Native friends have struggled with the pandemic. This might be difficult to hear, but for at least 400 years, people with dark skin – black and brown – have been enslaved here in the United States. Even now, many of the laws and rules we follow as people here in the States are unfair for our friends of color and many of our systems set them up for failure or lock them into cycles of poverty.

Here in New Mexico, I am learning of the battles of the 1500s between the Pueblo peoples and the Spanish conquistadors. It seems many times slavery in the States came from trying to use people to make money or things for free.

That's what happened in Egypt too – thousands of years ago.

See, long after Joseph, a new king came up in Egypt. He decided to build a bunch of buildings and monuments and saw Joseph's people – the Israelites – as free labor. So he enslaved them.

Sure, they had homes, and food, and clothing, and even some livestock. But. They were slaves. They worked brutal hours for nothing. Their homes and food and clothing were barely enough and poor quality. And, they had no way out.

Along comes Moses and the drama of freedom began – and our story today is actually toward the end of the battle between Moses and the king of Egypt – with God directing and letting loose all kinds of wild supernatural moments of destruction.

Although the weirdness of the lamb and the directions and the idea of death might overwhelm us, I want to focus on the determination of God to free God's people from slavery.

Maybe the how the Israelites were freed isn't as important as the why – if any story in scripture makes it clear, this one does. Slavery is wrong. God does not like it and God does not want it. And – God will always side with slaves and work through people to free them.

Why? I truly believe this – that God's deepest desire for us as humans is for us to become all we were each created to be – in community with each other. With all the diversity, all the differences, all the imagination and innovation and wildness we can let loose -to become an amazing creation of loving human beings in tune with God.

Slavery gets in the way. Not just for the slaves but also for the slaveholders – their focus shifts away from God's desire for their lives to controlling and using their slaves for profit. And it gets worse for both until something has to give.

So where is slavery now? In the 21st century? Around us?

Where are people using other people to make a profit? Where are people preventing others from becoming all they can be?

And what is our role as followers of Jesus when we know this isn't what God wants?

Notice God doesn't wave a magic wand to rescue the Israelites – God asks Moses and his brother Aaron to act. Expect the same in our lives – and that means things change slowly and with a fight. People with power and control rarely give it up easily. But our God is more powerful – as the king of Egypt found out.

And *that* is why the ritual is put in place. To remember who is more powerful – God.

So we must get to work. We must learn about the different forms of slavery in our world. We must learn what we can do to speak out against it, what changes we can make, and how we can help free today's slaves and slave holders as we all try to become all we were created to be – with freedom and love for all.

CHAT WITH GOD TIME

Pray as you are comfortable – read silently, say out loud, whisper.

Hey God, you know how you freed the slaves in Egypt?
Can you do that again with the slaves here and now?

Will you help us know who they are?
Will you help us know what to do?

Everyone should be free, right?

May it be so.

LET YOUR SOUL RESPOND

As you wish, choose a theme, and participate in a response to the story and the message.



FREEDOM

Practice awareness

- Have you experienced a need for freedom?
- Have you witnessed someone keeping another from being free?

What other ways could you help another become free?

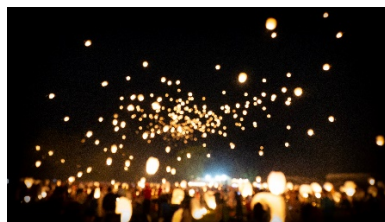


PEOPLE

Practice reflection

- Do you know the “people” you came from? Your ancestors?
- Do you know any of the stories behind their rituals?

What stories of your people give you hope?



MEMORY

Practice wisdom

- What memories of your family and/or people keep you going?
- How do you remember important moments?

What rituals of memory mean the most to you?

Options to share your responses:
(see end of packet for online options)

- create a piece of art representing your thoughts
- choose a song or playlist that shares your thoughts
- write something that reflects your thoughts
- what else can you imagine?

LET YOUR MIND RESPOND

Choose a “thought & question” pair to think about. You can do one or as many as you’d like.

1. God, or the LORD, comes on strongly in favor of the slaves in this story. *How do you think God feels about slavery? What forms of slavery exist today?*
2. The ritual God has the slaves go through seems strange to us in the 21st century. *What strange rituals do we have today? Why do you think we keep these rituals going?*
3. It took death before the king of Egypt would let the slaves go. *Why do you think people in power refuse to let slaves go? How might we address slavery today?*

Options to share your responses:
(see end of packet for online options)

- create a piece of art representing your thoughts
- choose a song or playlist that shares your thoughts
- write something that reflects your thoughts
- what else can you imagine?

LET YOUR BODY RESPOND

What will you do with this experience?

Choose an action (or more) to act on what you've learned ...

- Do some research on Google about people groups who have been slaves.
- Write a story about someone getting free.
- Look up murals made by enslaved people.
- Listen to a playlist on Spotify from artists of color.
- Watch a movie about slavery.

Options to share your responses:
(see end of packet for online options)

- create a piece of art representing your thoughts
- choose a song or playlist that shares your thoughts
- write something that reflects your thoughts
- what else can you imagine?

END HERE ...



Prepare for our return to our daily lives

- Take 3 deep breaths and calm your mind
- Consider the stillness of a lit candle



Pray as you are comfortable – read silently, say out loud, whisper

God, guide me through the day
God remind me of Christ's presence
Under me, over me
On my right and on my left
God, breathe in and through me

May it be so.

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK! PASTOR CRISTINE

ONLINE RESPONSE OPTIONS

How will you share this experience with our youth group?

If you would like to share your responses online with our youth and leaders, make sure you are part of our MVCC Youth Google Group.

Email Pastor Cristine at youth@montevista.org for more information.