

## LEARNING TO SEE THE INVISIBLE

Exodus, pt 3: Exodus 2:11-25  
Stonebrook Sunday AM, 8/20/23, Matt Heerema

In today's passage, we see a story of trying to carry out God's work in our own timing and in our own strength and with our own wisdom, and how this always brings about disaster.

Last week, we studied the narrative of Moses's birth and God's amazing protection and providence in his being saved from genocide, and being adopted by a princess of Egypt. In today's passage, the narrative fast forwards through all of Moses's upbringing and early adult life, to when he was about age 40, to a turning point in his life. Let's read.

### MOSES'S REJECTED RESCUE ATTEMPT

#### **Exodus 2:11-15 (CSB)**

11 Years later, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his own people and observed their forced labor. He saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his people. 12 Looking all around and seeing no one, he struck the Egyptian dead and hid him in the sand.

13 The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you attacking your neighbor?" 14 "Who made you a commander and judge over us?" the man replied. "Are you planning to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses became afraid and thought, "What I did is certainly known." 15 When Pharaoh heard about this, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in the land of Midian...

Moses sees an Egyptian attacking an Israelite, so he plays vigilante, taking matters of justice into his own hands, and ends up murdering the Egyptian. Then he sees an Israelite attacking an Israelite (by the way, dispelling any notion that the Israelites are simply helpless innocent victims in this story...), and he tries to sort them out, but they apparently had heard about his run in with the Egyptian (word travels fast)... as did Pharaoh, and now he's in trouble so he takes off.

What is going on in Moses's head? Why don't the Israelites listen to him? Fortunately we don't have to wonder, because the disciple Stephen preaches a sermon about it which is recorded in Acts 7.

**Acts 7:21-22, 24-25 (CSB)**

21 When he was put outside, Pharaoh's daughter adopted and raised him as her own son.

22 So Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his speech and actions.

24 When he saw one of them being mistreated, he came to his rescue and avenged the oppressed man by striking down the Egyptian. 25 He assumed his people would understand that God would give them deliverance through him, but they did not understand..

Moses had some innate sense of being his people's deliverer, but he had the timing and the means all wrong.

When God eventually does send Moses back with a command to deliver Israel from their oppressors in Egypt, it would not be through physical force. Violence is not the way God chose to deliver Israel from Egypt, even though the people of Israel were more numerous and powerful than Egypt, such that the Egyptians feared being overthrown by them (which is why Israel had been enslaved by them).

God's deliverance was to come by a different means: preaching. Proclamation of God's will, warning of consequences for disobedience, for failure to repent of their rebellion against the most high God. We will continue to see this as a theme in Exodus as well as the rest of the pentateuch, and it's not just Egypt's rebellion that is preached against and warned against, it is Israel's.

But this hadn't been revealed to Moses yet. He had some innate sense that he would be a deliverer to his people, but we have to understand where Moses's head was at. He was a prince prince of Egypt, adopted into the royal family. He had a life of affluence and privilege. His head was filled "with the wisdom of Egypt", which we know from ancient Egyptian writings, taught that the wealthy and politically powerful were "more human", that lower classes were essentially animals, "the walking dead", and that it was the divine right of the powerful to rule. (Not much has changed in worldly wisdom in thousands of years...)

All this propaganda led him to trust in his own strength and might. He had the right idea that his fellow Israelites should be freed from their oppression. He was also partially right that he would be God's instrument in that deliverance. But he had the methods wrong.

And so the would be deliver, preacher, and prophet was sent to the desert to be humbled.

# MOSES'S PERSONAL EXODUS

## **Exodus 2:15-22 (CSB)**

15...But Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in the land of Midian, and sat down by a well. 16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. 17 Then some shepherds arrived and drove them away, but Moses came to their rescue and watered their flock.

18 When they returned to their father Reuel, he asked, "Why have you come back so quickly today?" 19 They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock." 20 "So where is he?" he asked his daughters. "Why then did you leave the man behind? Invite him to eat dinner." 21 Moses agreed to stay with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. 22 She gave birth to a son whom he named Gershom, for he said, "I have been a resident alien in a foreign land."

It feels like a comment should be made about men in the Bible meeting their wives at a well. This is the third time it's happened. Isaac and Jacob both found wives this way. Maybe a message on biblical dating is found here? (Kidding!)

The main point here is that Moses wanders to the very wilderness that Israel will wander in. This Egyptian prince takes on the humble and detestable trade (at least to Egyptians) of shepherding, and stays in this wilderness for 40 years. He has a family, learns hard work and humility and how to survive. He likely learns about The Most High God from his father-in-law, *the* priest of the land, Reuel (which incidentally means "God's Friend"). Reuel, by the way is another name for Jethro, who we'll get to meet later as well.

Moses has his own personal exodus-desert-wandering for forty years, so he can have his self sufficiency hammered out of him. So he can be humbled in order to be God's deliverer according to God's methods in God's timing.

Hebrews 11 interprets for us.

## **Hebrews 11:24-27 (CSB)**

24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter 25 and chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin.

26 For he considered reproach for the sake of Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, since he was looking ahead to the reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt behind, not being afraid of the king's anger, for Moses persevered as one who sees him who is invisible.

"As one who sees him who is invisible" - what sustained Moses for 40 years in the wilderness? Faith in God – and at this point God certainly *seems* invisible especially to Israel... but Moses comes to know him—this is why God takes him to the desert for 40 years, so that Moses can come to know Him!

Who is this God that Moses comes to know so well that he can effectively see him? What does God teach Moses in the desert? The last two verses of our chapter tell us.

## **GOD HEARS, REMEMBERS, SEES, KNOWS**

### **Exodus 2:23-25 (CSB)**

23 After a long time, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned because of their difficult labor, and they cried out, and their cry for help because of the difficult labor ascended to God. 24 God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 and God saw the Israelites, and God knew.

- **God hears prayers**
- **God does not forget his promises**
- **God sees his people**
- **God knows his people**

And this is our lesson from this passage.

Here's the kicker: these four things are true *in the midst of hardship, oppression, and suffering*.

Think of Israel's situation at this point: enslaved, for decades if not centuries!

*When it can be tempting to believe that God cannot hear or will not listen.*

*When it seems that God has forgotten you, or forgotten his promises.*

*When it feels like God is overlooking or ignoring you, or you maybe are simply hidden from him.*

*When it feels like God just doesn't get it.*

*It is still true that God hears, God remembers his promises, God sees his people, and God knows his people's situation and he knows what needs to happen.*

Moses carried on in his forty years in the desert as one who could see this invisible God because he hung on to the fact that God hears, God remembers, God sees, and God knows.

And this lesson is meant for our encouragement.

## **HOW CAN WE KNOW THAT GOD KNOWS?**

The Israelites had promises that a deliverer would come. They had promises of a home. Promises of a future. This is what the book of Genesis is about. Promises that an offspring of Abraham would bless the whole world and crush the serpent's head! But oppressed by a foreign people in a foreign land? Living as slaves? Where were these promises? They were coming. Moses learned to cling to these promises.

And we know now that these promises are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus.

### **We know that God hears our prayers, because of Jesus.**

1 Timothy 2:5 (CSB)

5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,

### **We know that God will not forget his promises to us, because of Jesus.**

2 Corinthians 1:20 (CSB)

20 For every one of God's promises is "Yes" in [Christ].

### **We know that God sees us, because of Jesus.**

Matthew 28:20 (CSB)

"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

### **We know that God knows us, because of Jesus.**

Philippians 2:5-8 (CSB)

5 Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, 6 who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.

7 Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, 8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross.

Moses, the prince of Egypt thought he could deliver the Israelites through his strength and influence and wisdom and position of power. And so he failed and needed to be humbled in the desert for 40 years to be prepared to be God's tool.

But the gospel is that Jesus, the prince of heaven, humbled himself, giving up his position of power and strength and influence from a heavenly throne, and became a lowly servant, and in doing so, saved all who come to him in faith.