

Delivering

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 June 2023

Preacher: Pastor Jennifer Stamm

[0 : 0 0] Good morning, friends. This morning I'm reading from the book of Exodus, chapter 14, verses 10 through 14, and then 21 through 29.

As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord.

They said to Moses, Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land.

The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. During the last watch of the night, the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion.

[1 : 4 8] He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving, and the Egyptians said, Let's get away from the Israelites. The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.

Then the Lord said to Moses, Then the Lord said to Moses, Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen. Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place.

The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea.

Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground with a wall of water on their right and on their left. This is the word of our Lord.

Thanks be to God. So this week I was listening to the radio, and I forgot that my favorite station changed to a Christian music station.

[2 : 5 9] And the song came on, God Will Make a Way. Don Moen wrote this song when his relatives were in a car accident, and his young nephew was killed. The chorus of the song says, God will make a way where there seems to be no way.

He works in ways we cannot see. He'll make a way for you and me. And it's a beautiful song, and I invite you this week to find time to sit in stillness and listen and reflect on the majesty of God working in your life and making a way for you.

So I think I can share my story without ruining the story. There was a nine-year-old boy, and he was asked by his mother what he learned in Sunday school that day. And he said, Our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines in a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

When he got to the Red Sea, he called his engineers, and they built a big bridge, and all of the people walked across that bridge. Then he used his walkie-talkie, his radio, and he called in the B-52 bombers to blow up that bridge.

And all the Israelites were saved, and the Egyptians were destroyed. And his mom said, Is that really what your teacher taught you?

[4 : 22] And that young boy said, No, but if I told you the way the teacher told me, you'd never believe it. Our scripture reading today starts in the middle of a story, the story of impossible situations for those Israelites.

How many of you have found yourself in an impossible situation, something you feel like you'll never get out of, that you're caught between a rock and a hard place, and there's nowhere to go?

Keeping our faith in hard times can be difficult. It's hard to find God in what's happening in our situations, no matter what the difficulty is. But just like I said, eventually we find ourselves on the other side, and we realize that if God wasn't walking with us, he was dragging us the entire time.

The story of Moses is full of those moments, those rocks, those hard places, those seemingly impossible situations. Moses was born when the people of Israel were slaves in Egypt, and the Pharaoh ordered all of the male babies to be killed.

And Moses' mother hid him for three months. And when she couldn't hide him anymore, she made a boat, and she hid him in the reeds of the Nile River. And the Pharaoh's daughter found him and raised him as her own, being helped by his own mother.

[5 : 53] God had a plan for Moses, and he made a way for him to grow up, to become the person that God needed him to be. After Moses kills an Egyptian, he's forced to flee out of Egypt, and he has to live in the desert for 40 years.

He gets married and has two sons, and his life is working out pretty well for him. And Moses goes, and a bush, flames start coming out of a bush, and God tells him to rescue the Israelites from Egypt.

Now, I don't know about all of you, but if I was on a walk, and a bush burst into flames, I might be a little speechless. I might be a little hesitant.

And just like Moses, I might make excuses to God on why I couldn't do it, why he should send someone else. But God had plans for Moses, and he sent Moses and his brother Aaron to Egypt to rescue his people, so that God made a way for those Israelites to be saved from slavery.

God liberated the people who had been living in slavery for over 400 years. So our story picks up after the plagues, and Pharaoh has had enough.

[7 : 13] He finally says, take the people and leave. And the people are exiting Egypt, and they're looking forward to that better life that God has promised them.

They're finding their way out of Egypt. They leave Pharaoh. They leave the pyramids. They're looking for that better day. They're celebrating. And then Pharaoh changes his mind.

Pharaoh starts to look at his finances. He looks at his greed, his own arrogance. And Pharaoh's heart gets hard. Hard hearts cause misery.

And there's a refrain throughout the book of Exodus, things that God, that God is the one who's hardening Pharaoh's heart. It sounds strange, but scholars say that it's used to show that it's God who has the power and not Pharaoh.

The Hebrew people, even way after the Exodus for centuries, kept looking back and wondering, well, maybe we should have followed that Egyptian God. Whenever times got tough in their own lives.

[8 : 19] And so Exodus is a story that's continuing to pound home that the theme is Pharaoh is nothing. That sun God can't save you. It's God who delivered the people from Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh is nothing. He doesn't even have agency over his own heart. His heart was plenty hard on its own, despite the suffering of all of the Hebrew people.

He imposed upon them slavery. He was only focused on his own wealth, the own prosperity of his own people, to the expense of everyone else. He was a tyrant.

He was cruel. And his heart was hard. So let me ask you right now, is your heart hard? Is it hardening? Or is it opening?

Our hearts are always in the process. And if we see in the sense of our self-entitlement and greed or callousness towards other people, it will only lead to our hearts to be hardened more and cause misery to others.

[9 : 24] But by contrast, if our hearts are open and softening, we can have compassion and empathy. We can hear about the experiences of someone who's not like us, someone who has different values and sensibilities, and we can learn and we can respond with passion to real human need and not be fearful about our own situations, but respond out of graciousness and love.

So shortly after the Hebrews left, Pharaoh changed his mind, and instead of letting the people go, he told the Egyptian soldiers to go out to round up the Israelites and bring them back to slavery.

When the people saw the Egyptian army advancing on them, they assumed that their time was up, that Pharaoh had changed his mind not to let them go, not to bring them back into slavery, but to slaughter them where they stood.

And they started to panic, and anxiety within the people rose, and they conspired against Moses. They say to Moses, was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the wilderness?

What have you done bringing us out of Egypt? Leave us alone to serve the Egyptians. It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.

[10 : 50] They wonder how they could let themselves be fooled into following Moses and thinking that God cared about them, about their plight. I think at some point on the faith journey that we all have moments, or we feel like we've been fooled.

Like maybe it's pointless, like maybe God really isn't there, that there's no help for our lives, and it's all this gigantic letdown. Sometimes our spiritual journey feels like we take one step forward and many steps back.

We feel fooled by our faith. My daughter Haley was very sick. And I prayed, and I believed, and I trusted that things were going to come out okay and better for everyone involved.

But it didn't turn out that way at all. I felt wronged, and it hurt. And I was like, God, I'm here for you, really. I'm praying. I thought positive thoughts, and I've done everything right.

And you couldn't even help me out on this one. I mean, I serve you every day, and what's the point of this? So what do you do when you feel like maybe this is all in vain and it's kind of pointless?

[12 : 07] When you feel that anxiousness and that panic, what happens when you can identify with the Hebrew people that were trapped, and they couldn't go back to the past, and their future was uncertain?

The Hebrew people, their strategy was just to complain and attack their leader, Moses. We recognize that sometimes things don't turn out our way, and that's life. But we're going through, when we go through a time of disappointment, it's kind of like when we stub our toe.

When you stub your toe, the only thing you can think about is your toe and how much it hurts. We ignore everything else that's going on. We look, and we study our pain under a microscope.

But if we stop and step back and take a larger perspective, a wider vantage point, and see the full picture, we can see that there are disappointments in life, that there are injustices that come to each and every one of us.

Faith doesn't make us exempt, but it reminds us that when these things happen, that we should take a look at the suffering of others and how we can do our part to make a difference in their lives.

[13 : 23] When we take a look at the bigger picture, we can see that God is responding to us, that God does provide us a way to get through that hardship. God provides us with a community of people like all of you here that will support you.

God provides us with the internal resources to face whatever's in front of us. So in life, try to take the long view. God didn't bring you this far to abandon you.

After Moses heard the complaints of the Hebrew people, he tried to bolster them up. He said, fear not. And he tells them to stand still. That God's work continues, and he says, the Lord will fight for you.

You only have to keep still. And I know that there's someone here that needs to hear that today. That to stand firm, keep still. Do not be afraid.

Be still and know that God is fighting for you. God's fighting for you. Have you ever thought about that? God isn't fighting against you.

[14 : 32] God's not up there uninterested in your life. God is fighting for each one of you. He's fighting for your freedom from whatever it is that binds your spirit, that binds you.

He's fighting for you to be the best person that you can be. God is always on your side. So be still. Quiet down. Stop your mind that's always racing with worry and anxiety.

And be still and trust. Be still enough to know that it's God's spirit that leads you. That the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the ruler of all creation, is on your side.

When Moses encounters and reaches the people and they're complaining, God finally intervenes. He gets involved and God asks, Why do they cry out?

God wants to know why these people haven't been paying attention. I brought them through so much already. And they've seen the wonders. What did they think that was about?

[15 : 38] The plagues, the frogs, the locusts, the blood, the hail and fire. Don't they see what I've done for them already? I'm the God of those who are hurting, of those who are struggling.

That's who God is. And if God is asking, Why don't they see that I'm on their side? That I'm working for them. That I'm fighting for them. But at the first hand of adversity, they turn on me.

That's why this story is in here. It's to show that we can see the wonders of God in our lives all the time. We can wear those blessed t-shirts.

We can feel the presence of God when we're at the ocean or outside. We can see the stars. We can see the smile of a new baby. Or hear it laugh.

And we can feel God's presence. But when times get tough and things don't turn on our way, it's so tempting to give up and start complaining.

[16 : 41] So Moses had commanded the people to fear not, be still, trust God. God is fighting for them. And it took real guts for them to stand there with the Egyptian army approaching with no way of escape.

And Moses does this thing. He follows the command of God and he gets the people moving forward again. And he stretches out his hand. And the waters open up and the wall on the right and the left creating a clear path.

So let's take a look. Go ahead. The Lord of hosts will do battle for us. Behold his mighty hand.

Behold his mighty hand.

God opens the sea with a blast of his nostrils.

[18 : 01] Lead them through the midst of the waters. His will be done. He opens the waters before them.

And he bars our way with fire. Let us go from this place. Men cannot fight against a god. Better to die in battle with a god than live in shame. Praise God and down into it!

That's one of my favorite movies.

And there's nothing like Charlton Heston up there. Now in those movie versions, they always really hype it up and they make it seem so dramatic. But it is.

That's the most dramatic point in the story. The moment where we see that it's God who saves them. That God rescues them. That it's God who delivers them. That ultimate sign of faith.

[19 : 36] God intervened on their behalf. And it's a story that they're going to want to repeat and keep alive. It says, God always intervenes on our behalf. It's who God is.

God looks out for those who are suffering. So after the people cross over, we discover this fundamental truth of our faith.

The people had been trapped between the army and the water. And God makes a way out of no way. That's the truth of our lives. That God provides us a way.

And it's not always some magical, big, spectacular miracle like that. It may be something more ordinary. But somehow God provides a way no matter what we're going through.

Jesus tells us, I am the way, the truth, and the life. He shows us the way to live. No matter what circumstances we're going through. He asks us to live our lives open hearted.

[20 : 38] He shows us the way of compassion. The way of healing. The way of faith, strength, and love. Looking out for others. And when we follow this way of Jesus, we'll always find ways for the hardships of life.

One detail in the Exodus story is when the people leave Pharaoh's presence, they're guided by a fiery pillar. And we saw a little bit of it in the movie.

And I don't know what that looks like. But I saw the image of a fire tornado in Northern California. And it made me think that it could be something like that. That they were following God's presence.

And God had them. And he was clearing the way for them in front. And as they got to the sea and the Egyptian army came, this fiery pillar moved to their backs and put itself between the Hebrew people and the advancing Egyptian army with all of their superior technology.

It's this wonderful lesson that God has our backs. He had the backs of the Hebrew people. And he has your back. You know in the movies and on the TV shows, they talk about, I got your back.

[21 : 48] One of the police officers go into danger. And the other one says, I got your back, buddy. And that's a way for them to be able to move forward in trust and in confidence.

When it's the God who makes a way out of no way, when God has your back, you can proceed in any circumstances. You can advance towards things that you're called to do and not be afraid to embrace all of life and what it has for you.

God's got your back. God will deliver you. God makes a way where there has no way to be seen. Our future is secure in God.

God. Please pray with me. Merciful God, speak to us through your word. Grant us all grace that we may not be mere hearers of your word, but doers also.

Give us the grace of your Holy Spirit that we may believe what has been said to us. That we may bring glory and honor to your name in all that we do as you conform us to the image of your son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

[23 : 03] Amen. So we have a few things that are happening this week that are in your bulletin. This Friday, our new women's group, Women of Pendleton, will meet in the fellowship hall. We are going to have games and snacks.

So bring your favorite snack and a game. If you have a graduate, it can be high school, college, technical school, someone you know, someone in our congregation.

Please let us know that within the next week or so we will be celebrating our graduates. I don't like doing dads and grads, so we will be doing that a little later. We have our new meal ministry and there's information on that in here.

And then we have a very special video today. Get ready, get set, ready, set, move!

Hey guys, we are back and we got a really fun day planned. We are leaving our hotel and we are going to do so much today and it's going to be amazing. Are you ready? Let's go.

[24 : 08] Woo! Alright, we are on to our first stop, the beach. We found a really cool beach that has a park attached to it. Now we are going to go see what else this park has to offer.

We all just got done hanging out and playing games at the beach. We just found some frisbee golf. Next, we are going to go find some more fun things to do. We just found this giant waterfall and there are a bunch of people here, but it's so cool.

I've never seen a waterfall this big in my life. Time to go swimming! No, no, no, you cannot go swimming. I watched this cool science video and it was joking. You cannot swim in Niagara Falls.

It's way too dangerous. You just saved your life. We found this nice trail that we are walking on. We are going to see where it leads. Hopefully it leads us to somewhere where we can get a snack. We had a quick stop at Uncle P's.

Get some cold treats and after a hot day it's been really refreshing. We just found this great spot to eat our ice cream at. It's on this bridge with this cool water scenery.

[25 : 05] I got cotton candy ice cream. What did you guys get? We got cheeseburger. We got pizza cake. We got vanilla shakes. I got broccoli and a umarai ice cream.

Alright, we have been on the move all day. We just finished our ice cream and we even made some friends throughout the day. We are super tired so we are going to go down by the creek and watch the sunset over the water. Come on guys, let's go!

Oh, thank you. We are good. Okay. Well, suit yourself guys. Look how much fun this is. I just can't contain my excitement for VVS this year.

We get to play games, make crafts, do science, sing and dance, all that fun. Even story time and snacks. It will be so much fun, just as fun as everything we've done today.

We get to learn how we can move for God everywhere we go. Like look, even in the kayak and in the water. Join us August 7th through August 11th from 9am to 1230pm.

[26 : 05] Everyone is welcome, including friends going into kindergarten in the fall. Up to those who completed sixth grade this year. Everyone must visit PendletonChurch.org to register.

Make sure to register by August 4th. There are many opportunities to help support VVS. Please consider making a monetary donation, donating items from a sign-up sheet, or signing up to help during the week of VVS.

Mom, sign me up, sign me up. Set, move, hey! Applause So, it takes a lot of volunteers, donations to make our VVS run.

So, we invite you to take a look, sign up, help, and hopefully, we'll get to see you in August. So, please get ready to receive your blessing. Go with the God who can part the troubled waters of your life and lead you through to dry ground.

Go with the God who can scatter and subdue all that hinders you on your journey. Go forth in God's might and in God's peace. Amen.