

WELCOME 17th January 2021 – 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany '21 B

Exodus 15:1-18

Welcome! It's great to be together again. Happy New Year!

The Guilfoyles have returned safely from SA...to 2 weddings, news of a 21st B-day & babies. What a great way to kick-off the new year...and move forward trusting God to bless each of us in similar wonderful ways throughout 2021...especially today knowing that when God's people gather to hear his word...his grace makes things new.

As has become our custom there are Group Study & Discussion resources in your hands. *So that for each of us worship is an all week long experience & as God leads you into the fullness of His word & his work in your lives & he will then lead you to someone this week who needs to hear the good news from you.* We are still doing those things we need to maintain a level of safety: Hand sanitizer. Masks. Sign in. No morning tea just yet. Offering. Communion.

As we move into this week...Finger prints – DNA – Dental Records – Retina Scan – Supposedly those tell me who you are as distinct from you or you. Better even than 100pt of ID. But if you travel anywhere right now...you'll need a permit – driver's license (photo id) – Corona Virus Test - negative results & positive compliance

But when you stand in front of a mirror...What do you see reflected back? Who do you see staring back at you? That self-image & self-perception becomes part of our identity. Where identity used to be established by family roots, cultural heritage & its ceremonies & rites of passage...more & more it's by group, party, ideology, or society's value of our achievement & occupation. Even the media plays a major role in how we perceive ourselves. And sometimes **that** perception is a distorted image that doesn't reflect reality.

We're treating this year like the "re-set" button on an electronic device: the "on/off" switch that brings everything back to 0 – starts over. We're asking God to re-set our lives to his will – our hearts to his way – our path to his purpose – our identity to his people & our direction to his destiny....because we trust that in every day in every step along the way *The Lord will reign forever and ever!*

We'll explore & experience that together. Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

O God, you spoke your word and revealed your good news in Jesus Christ. Fill all creation with that word again, so that by proclaiming your joyful promises to all nations and singing of your glorious hope to all people, we may become one living body, your living and life-giving presence on the earth. Through Christ we pray...Amen.

Let's sing & then we'll hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. When you are "under the pump," how do you typically react?
health - \$\$ - family – big decision – work pressure – "tight spot"
2. What's your favourite way to "celebrate"?
Have you ever really worked hard for or waited a long time for something & it came good? What'd you do to "celebrate"?
3. If you could only share one fact or detail about yourself, what would you most want people to know?

1 Epiphany '21 B – RE-SET...IDENTITY (DESTINY)

It was surreal crossing the border into SA just ^{b/4} the new year: permits, paperwork, proof of residency in a no-threat zone, adequate days of isolation. In 1987, I crossed into East Berlin @ Checkpoint Charlie...this felt almost like that except the guys in the little guard house spoke better English...in Denmark not the Germans

But in all our talk these days about “hard borders,” there was no border more impassable than the Red Sea. Egypt on one side. Sinai on the other. God’s people sandwiched ^{b/4} Pharaoh’s army & the waves. *But Moses told the people, “Don’t be afraid. **Just stand still** & watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. The Lord himself will fight for you. **Just stay calm.**”* (you need only to **be still**) – Ex 14-13-14 What we just read Ex 15 is the epilogue to God parting the sea, drowning Pharaoh’s army & granting the freedom God had promised. *I love this bit. The Lord himself will fight for you. **Just stay calm. (be still)*** How good are you at that...the stay calm/be still part? That’s what I thought. Me either.

But the song Moses & the people sing...is actually the way God builds our faith in him...increases our trust & confidence & assurance in his hand working in our lives so that we live from his strength...from his power...from our standing as his children from what he has promised for us & into what he calls us to be up to here & now ^{w/} hope that cannot be denied or disappointed.

I want you to see how this song is actually a faith builder – confidence strengthener – hope creator that is not just a song from our faith history (artefact from long ago). It’s a reminder that when God re-sets our lives by his grace, we receive not only a re-set identity, but built into that identity is a new destiny...and that destiny is the culmination – pinnacle of what God has planned from the beginning. About now you know what I’m going to say **BIBLES** OR THIS TIME ONLY...keep the service order in front of you...so you can follow along. 2021 – year of bringing your BIBLE

I want us to start at the very end...vs 18...everything in this song points here. *The Lord will reign forever & ever!* That’s actually the whole story of the Bible...God’s in charge forever. Let’s set this up right...In the beginning God spoke & everything that is came into being at the very sound of God’s word. God’s in charge. *God said...and there was...* Everything responds to God instantly. God’s in charge. And then at the end: *Then I saw a new heaven & a new earth, for the old heaven & the old earth had disappeared...And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, & they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, & there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, pain. All these things are gone forever...*

No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God & of the Lamb will be there, & his servants will worship him. They will see his face, & his name will be written on their foreheads. There will be no night there — no need for lamps or sun — for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever & ever. – Rev 21 & 22.

From beginning to end what does God want us to know? *The Lord will reign forever & ever!* God’s in charge forever...from 1st page to last that truth never changes. Our role in that Gen 1:26-28 is to bear his image live his presence & carry out his ruling purpose here on earth. **HOW?** When everything on this earth seems to be arrayed against us? When the curse isn’t fully gone yet? When death sorrow crying & pain are still here? When fear uncertainty doubt chaos disorder threaten @ every step?

Singing helps...Singing this song...1st 5 verses are simply historical ...this is what God did. *“I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; he has hurled both horse & rider into the sea. The Lord is my strength & my song; he has given me victory. This is my God, & I will praise him—my father’s God, & I will exalt him! **The Lord is a warrior;** Yahweh is his name! Pharaoh’s chariots & army he has hurled into the sea. The finest of Pharaoh’s officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters gushed over them; they sank to the bottom like a stone.* Now look...I know it sounds gruesome; singing/dancing on the dry shore of the Red Sea while Egypt’s soldiers are bobbing on the waves like fish at Menindee Lakes. Sounds awful. But when someone who wants you dead & has the capacity to fulfil that desire is dealt ^{w/}...what’re you gonna do?

The people trapped at the sea are not supposed to save themselves. They can do nothing to effect their salvation at that moment. What they are *SUPPOSED* to do is be still & rest in the deliverance which the Father will work for them. The Bible assures us: God is a mighty warrior who has come to rescue & recreate his people & all things by suffering for our sin, dying for us & rising again 3 days later putting death to death. He now offers freedom & salvation to you/all. This great deliverer is not seeking repayment. He is seeking a people who receive his salvation as a gift & live from the identity he gives into the destiny he promises from that point onward. **YES** I just read Jesus into the Exodus because that’s precisely what he’s done for us He fought to the death the battle against sin death & the devil that we cannot win on our own & leaves them dead in the tomb & on the final day when all of us experience the great resurrection to eternal life that is ours in Him alone.

We would do well to spend significant time every day singing if needed reminding ourselves who we are because of so great a gift in Jesus. We would do well to make sure we spend time surrounded by fellow singers who can help us remember that *You were dead because of your sins & because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave our sin. He canceled the record of the*

charges against us & took it away by nailing it to the cross. – Col 2:13-14 † See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, & that is what we are!...Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. – 1 Jn 3:1-2 I am a child of God.....When God re-sets our lives by his grace, we receive a re-set identity

That's great...but you know as well as I do that the old sinner is a good swimmer. Drowned he is in baptism as sure as Egypt's charioteers, but back he comes again & again; so our song needs more verses: "Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power. Your right hand, O Lord, smashes the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty, **you overthrow those who rise against you.** You unleash your blazing fury; it consumes them like straw.

Anything that "rises against" God, that seeks to claim his place of rule over us or our world is rightly called an idol...And we have them...We all at some point buy into the fake beliefs & counterfeit worldviews we encounter: "I" am the sole authority for my existence, what I acquire/achieve/accumulate makes me a better person, my tribe or group is better than yours, truth is what I decide. Lies all of them...but we are not powerless against them...*We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin...Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.* – Rom 6:6-7, 14 *no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me...*

While our real enemies are not flesh & blood...but sin & evil, sometimes the human ones make life miserable...Even there God has the final word: "*The **enemy** boasted, 'I will chase them & catch up with them. I will plunder them & consume them. I will flash my sword; my powerful hand will destroy them.'* But you blew with your breath, (nostril) & the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who is like you among the gods, O Lord— *glorious in holiness, awesome in splendour, performing great wonders? You raised your right hand, & the earth swallowed our **enemies.*** But John, I don't really have any enemies...No...Go out to the Uni or a High School classroom & make a public case for the Biblical understandings of marriage or sex. Speak boldly on behalf of the unborn. We've seen the vast censorship by the major tech platforms in just the past week...to disagree with the accepted narrative is to be silenced. Invite a not-yet-Xn to worship or to read the Bible w/ you. Dare to disagree w/ a socially accepted but non-Biblical worldview. There is legislation ^{b/4} Vic Parliament right now that would make public sharing of the gospel increasingly fraught. You have enemies...more than you imagine. But even there God has the final word. *But when you are arrested & stand trial, don't worry in advance about what to say. Just say what God tells you at that time, for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit.* – Mk:13-11

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials & sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." – Jn 16:33

But to what end has Christ overcome this world for us? Where does this victory won by the Father lead? "*With your unfailing love you lead the people you have redeemed. In your might, **you guide them to your sacred home.** The peoples hear & tremble; anguish grips those who live in Philistia. The leaders of Edom are terrified; the nobles of Moab tremble. All who live in Canaan melt away; terror & dread fall upon them. The power of your arm makes them lifeless as stone until your people pass by, O Lord, until the people you purchased pass by. **You will bring them in & plant them on your own mountain—the place, O Lord, reserved for your own dwelling,** the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established."*

2 quick things...1st – The Israelites have only just left Egypt. Those nations are just names...they don't know where those nations are. They have not yet met those nations in battle. But ^{b/4} **the fight**, God promises triumph. What is as yet unknown to them is an accomplished feat w/ the Father. You have no idea what the future holds, but you do know the future is where God has already established your victory. You do know that God has already conquered every enemy on your behalf. The last enemy of course is death & that enemy was defeated in Christ. In my reading this week I read Mt 14...Jesus walks on storm-tossed Sea of Galilee to the disciples' boat & Peter walks w/ him. It struck me that when the frightened disciples see Jesus their fear multiplies & they cry out "*It's a ghost!*" But Jesus says "*Don't be afraid. Take courage. I am here!*" At this point nothing has changed for the 12. Wind/waves are still a ferocious howling chaos 11 stay in the boat. I reckon hanging on for dear life wondering what's going to happen now. But Peter utters those amazing words: "*Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water.*" Peter somehow grasps that the point of Jesus is not to calm the storm but to lead Peter through the midst of it...Philistia Moan Edom Canaan must be defeated in battle but the point of those battles is not to build a superior army but to march out to see how God will bring victory through the struggle. health -\$\$ - family – work pressure – "tight spot"

2nd thing...The Father's eternal desire is for you to live in his presence...in a full & abundant relationship w/ him. Notice that God is the actor in guiding his people to his home...bringing us in to establish us in the place where he dwells. From start to finish it's grace. God redeems. God purchases. God claims us for his own love delight & joy...to live under his rule but at his side...not under his thumb of the heel of his boot. *The Lord will reign forever and ever!* You see...that's the goal. To rescue & redeem everything in heaven & earth...to make all things new...to establish once & for all God's rule of eternal joy & abundant love...destroy death forever & abolish sorrow crying pain darkness chaos sin...to unite all things in Christ once & for all & forever.

The good news is not that I get to go to heaven when I die because my sin is forgiven...The good news is that in Christ crucified risen & ruling God has rescued you & me & all creation from the jaws of death & the fires of evil...that what was promised from the garden will be fulfilled according to the work of Christ & the purpose of the Father...when God re-sets our lives by his grace, we receive not only a re-set identity, but built into that identity is a new destiny...and that destiny is the culmination – pinnacle of what God has planned from the beginning.

And to recount that good news again & again whether you sing it or not...is actually the way God builds our faith in him...increases our trust & confidence & assurance in his hand working in our lives so that we live from his strength...from his power... from our standing as his children from what he has promised for us & into what he calls us to be up to here & now w/ hope that cannot be denied or disappointed.

We're treating this year like the "re-set" button on an electronic device. We're asking God to re-set our lives to his will – our hearts to his way – our path to his purpose – our identity to his people & our direction to his destiny...because we trust that in every day in every step along the way *The Lord will reign forever and ever!*

Let's pray w/ that in mind... **Father we make no pretence to your throne, so have your way in us. Re-set our lives to your will. Re-set our hearts to your way. Re-set our path to your purpose. Re-establish your rule over us as your people and reorient our hearts to your promised destiny for us so we live out your grace and love to all we know. Through Jesus Christ we pray... Amen.**