

WELCOME 11th June 2023 – 2nd Sunday after Pentecost '23 A

Exodus 2:11-3:22 (series slide with others separately on click)

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! **Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom** Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.

As we move into this week...

"I understand" "I know just how you feel" "I know what you're going through"
Many times those words leave our mouths before we've taken time to think...If we thought, we might not say them. We're NOT the other person. We don't really know what it's like to be in their position. We don't really understand. Similar, perhaps. But we are NOT them. And many times we aren't able to do anything to change the situation. But when God says...

"I have certainly **seen** the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have **heard** their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I **know** their suffering.
So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians & lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile & spacious land.

...there is an intimate bond from which God speaks to those whom he loves. When God speaks of "knowing" it involves a commitment to act on behalf of God's devotion to the wounded, enslaved, & suffering to whom God has promised to be redeemer. Whatever our circumstances God knows, God acts & God reveals his presence calling us to act in his name toward his purpose. God always works through his faithful people & their circumstances to see his promise to fulfillment. Today is the 2nd week of our series in the book of Exodus, a Journey of Promise. It's a journey initiated, led, & sustained by God who is present with his people, whatever they face. Today Moses is in the desert...a place of desolation...on a journey going nowhere...maybe you are too! But on that journey Moses meets God who was there all along. Moses is transformed in that place, leaving with a new mission, a new message, a new view of himself, & a new view of God. God also wants that for you today, to meet you, reveal himself to you, speak with you and send you out with his presence, power and a holy purpose.

We'll experience & share that today...Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord, open to us the sea of your mercy & water us with full streams of your grace. Make us children of quietness, & heirs of peace. Light the fire of your love in our hearts & strengthen our weakness by your power. Help us to see, hear, & know Your living presence in us today...Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Let's hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. When are you most likely to feel alone?
2. Who is someone who is present in your journey of faith who demonstrates Christ's presence? How might you learn from them to be Christ for someone else?

2 PENTECOST '23 A – A JOURNEY OF PROMISE: THE PROMISE IN PERSON

You know the old story...child wakes up with a cry in the middle of the night. Dream? Noise? Toilet/Drink? Parents rush in to quiet/calm the fear & offer **the** reassurance, "Honey anytime you're scared just remember Jesus is right here with you" & **the** child replies, "That's great, but sometimes you know you just need Jesus with skin on" It's true. Sometimes we need some**ONE** to act in the place of Jesus...to "flesh out" the love we know is always ours in him...to make tangible that which is often hard to "feel"...to say in a way we can hear it that we are loved, protected, heard, & known, & not on our own, forgotten, adrift, or alone...to demonstrate the present-tense reality of God **FOR** us.

It's been 40 years in the story of Moses since vs 10 of chapter 2 of Exodus where we left off last week & the only thing that's changed is the suffering of the Israelites has grown worse. Their slavery has become harsher. Their oppression more grinding. Perhaps their sense of abandonment has deepened. So much so that even when Moses intervenes rashly & violently...rescues one from the slaver's whip, there is no sense something good has happened or that the lives of the slaves can ever taste a moment of freedom, because by now they've even learned to turn on each other...& on Moses. So he runs away to build a life apart from Egypt & the Israelites. He becomes a "foreigner in a foreign land" a man without a country.

*Years passed, & the king of Egypt died. But the Israelites continued to groan under their burden of slavery. They cried out for help, & their cry rose up to God. God heard their groaning, & he remembered his covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob. He looked down on the people of Israel & knew it was time to **act**.* Time & trouble are not intrusions or interruptions in God's plans, purposes or promises. The changing of kings & the worsening of circumstances can't impede or inhibit what God intends for your life.

God knows us & our circumstances with the intent of coming to us for our good. Psalm 139...I could pick almost any vss...**O** Lord you have examined my heart & you know me. You know when I sit down or rise up; you understand my thoughts from afar. You search out my wanderings & my lying down; you discern all my ways...Where can I go to escape Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in the grave, You are there. **If** I live at the edge of the sunrise or at the end of the ocean even there Your hand will lead me; Your right hand will hold me.

God the Father never simply sits like grandpa on the porch swing watching idly as life passes by. Ps 139 reminds us *Indeed you created my inward parts; you wove me in my mother's womb...You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born.*

Whatever the situations or conditions of this life...God sees, hears & knows ^{w/} an intimacy unmatched...*wove me together...created the intricate intimate parts of us.* God's knowledge of us is always hand-in-glove ^{w/} his desire to work in us, for us, ^{w/} us for our lasting good...*God knows* always in Scripture means God is moving to carry out his work in us. God never *knows* & stands still, looks away, or closes his eyes. **They** cried out for help, & their cry rose up to God. God heard their groaning, & he **remembered his covenant promise** to Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob. He looked down on the people of Israel & **knew it was time to act**. God's knowledge of us is always hand-in-glove ^{w/} his desire to work in us, for us, ^{w/} us for our lasting good... **God** knows us & our circumstances with the intent of coming to us for our good.

And God reports to Moses precisely what God knows is happening to his beloved here on earth...but more than just facts...the *implications* for both God **AND** Moses: **Then** the Lord told Moses, "I have certainly **seen** the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have **heard** their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I **know** their suffering. **So I have come down to rescue** them from the power of the Egyptians & **lead** them out of Egypt **into their own fertile & spacious land**. God remembering his covenant is not like me remembering something I was supposed to get at the shops just as I finish at the check-out...*Oh shoot!* God *remembers* like the way you pray for a loved one in distress...like the way you look at your adult child & remember the day they were born...like the way you look at your spouse & remember the day you were married...God's remembers from the heart...it's a visceral recall of his love & devotion...a gut-level cherishing of you & his promise for you...his commitment for your flourishing well-being. *So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians & lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile & spacious land.*

1st There is a goal, destiny, & purpose to God's promises. To rescue is but part of the promise...to lead them to a place of God's own choosing where they can flourish *in relationship ^{w/} him* is the fullness of it. vs 18 says Moses is to tell Pharaoh their journey is for a 3-day sojourn into the wilderness to worship. The promise is always that God's people ultimately end up in his presence where they offer back their whole being in thanksgiving, worship, adoration, devotion, & joy-filled love. This world is not our home. This is not as good as it gets. There will come a day when the pleasures of this life; all its fleeting happinesses & grueling tragedies are wiped away to be replaced by light & love & joy & satisfaction the likes of which you & I cannot imagine...*For since the world began, no ear has heard & no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for him!* – Is 64:4/2 Cor 2:9

God knows us & our circumstances with the intent of coming to us for our good. There is a goal, destiny, & purpose to God's promises...life in full ^{w/} him forever.

But we haven't fully heard what God has said...Because God is from eternity committed to his human creation he must act for us to rescue us to demonstrate his holy purposes **for us**...to reveal his rule over all things **to us**...& to bring to fulfillment his restoration **of us** completely to himself. That's the implication of that promise for God...but Moses...Moses too is implicated here...just look...

So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians & lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile & spacious land. wait for it vs 9 **Look!** The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, & I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. **Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.** The promises of God are always delivered w/ skin on. God always works through his faithful people & their circumstances to see his promise to fulfillment. Throughout the Bible God always is at work through frail fragile faltering sometimes-failing human hands. "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars to show that this all-surpassing power is from God & not from us." - 2 Cor 4:6-7 That's us...cracked leaky clay pots...filled to bursting with the all-surpassing power of God in the risen Jesus Christ. **Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt...As the Father sent me so I am sending you.** The promises of God are always delivered w/ skin on. Ours!

I love Moses...he tries so hard to say "No." Just like a bunch of y'all who won't let me ask you a couple of innocent questions up here... **But Moses protested to God, "Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?"** Moses thinks it's about HIM. Bless his heart. **God answered, "I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain."** Messenger is just the messenger. "Who are you? You're the guy who travels in God's presence. You're the guy through whom God will make his will & promises known." It's not about Moses at all. It's about God who has his hand on Moses' life even out here in the desolation place...road to nowhere...chaos land where Moses thought he could hide...God is sovereign even in the desolation/wilderness. **HEAR ME**...that place in you...desolate dry destroyed chaotic...God owns it. That place of desolation is the place where God is going to act...speak...change your life...turn your existence upsidedown...give you his mission his message & his view of you so you become the one through whom the Father makes his will & promises known. Moses ain't done yet...he'll give 5 "no-s" eventually this is 2nd

But Moses protested, "If I go to the people of Israel & tell them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they will ask me, 'What is his name?' What should I tell them?" God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you." Yahweh יהוה

I am who I am...I will be who I will be...the God who calls all things to be... Specifically for Moses & us as God's people it means "I am the God who will be for you whatever you need so you can complete my purpose carry out my mission dwell in my presence experience my power...I am the God who guarantees you are never alone never defenseless never in perpetual repetitive bondage never without comfort never without resources...never without direction...never without someone to whom you can offer my promises." I am the God who says you have eternal access to my heart...my love...my Spirit...presence power provision purpose...

Even here...there is an intimate bond from which God speaks to those whom he loves. When God speaks to us it involves a commitment to act on behalf of God's devotion to the wounded, enslaved, & suffering to whom God has promised to be redeemer. Whatever our circumstances God knows, God acts & God reveals his presence calling us to act in his name toward his purpose. God always works through his faithful people & their circumstances to see his promise to fulfillment. And today...that's you...

TAKE IT HOME-

For whom is God asking you to be his promise 'with skin on'
& how will you do it?

Let's pray with that in mind...

Gracious Father, you know us...& everything about us because you formed us for your joy, have claimed us as your own, & set us to work in your world for the sake of Christ & for the expanding embrace of your Kingdom. By your Spirit use all our efforts & energies so that your church is strengthened, your mission furthered, & your Name praised. Through Jesus Christ we pray...Amen.