

## WELCOME 9<sup>th</sup> July 2023 – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost '23 A

Exodus 11:1-12:14 & 28-36

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! Word is Pastor John's surgery seems to have gone well! Eventually he'll be back but in the meantime...**Growing Praise** inserts are still 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. **Zoom** Bible Study Catch-ups will be on hold until John gets back in front of his computer in about a month or so. But they will be back.

**As we move into this week...**

**World** leaders have them...As do **most** celebrities...Even **the** Pope has his own. What? a PSD - Personal Security Detail. Protection. Bodyguards. Trained people relied on to protect you & keep you safe from all danger at all costs. Their presence is meant to help a person relax & feel safe as they go about life.

In **OUR** life's journey, we should remember we live surrounded within our own secure protection: a faithful God who never leaves us, whose might no-one or nothing can surpass, & who has done all that is necessary to save us. Whatever we encounter, God is in command & mighty to save. His promise of salvation also comes with the promise of protection...from all that enslaves, from all that threatens, and from all that diminishes, distorts, or destroys life. It's a promise we as the people of God need to remember, celebrate, & claim so we can enjoy life to the full, in whatever this world throws at us. So today we claim again the protection of the promise & the fullness it provides.

**This** is a day to remember. Each year, from generation to generation, you must celebrate it as a special festival to the Lord. This is a law for all time.

You are alive because of the blood of the Lamb...so let's celebrate what the blood of the Lamb is working in and through your life.

Let's pray...

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Father you call us as your own & release us into this world for your purposes. Let every thought word & deed be held firm in your grace. Make our worship today & our lives in all things a reflection of your mission to this world & the path ahead for this band of disciples one that invites others into your life & love. Amid challenges & changes equip us by your Spirit for whatever tasks you have set for us. Infuse your wisdom into our hearts so that we discern your will & way in all things for your glory & the widened embrace of your kingdom in this city...through Jesus we pray...Amen.*

*Let's hear God's word...*

## 6 PENTECOST '23 A – A JOURNEY OF PROMISE: PROTECTION OF THE PROMISE

As we've read through the book of Exodus...and continue today...We've seen Egypt battered by 9 horrific plagues sent by God to loose Pharaoh's grip on God's people **AND** to break Pharaoh's slavery to his own pretence of greatness...his self-owned illusion that he is mightier than Yahweh. **The** Nile turned to blood...frogs, gnats & flies filled Egypt, their livestock was diseased, they suffered incurable boils & endured fire-blazing hailstones, locusts devoured every green plant & darkness cloaked the sky...These 9 afflictions were brought down on Egypt because Pharaoh thought his greatness & glory surpassed that of Yahweh. 9 hardships wrecked Egypt & brought its people to their knees, but none of them came near the land of Goshen, the province of Egypt where God's people the Israelites lived. While Egypt suffered, God's people were untouched by these calamities. Today is the 10<sup>th</sup>...

**"This** is what the Lord says: At midnight tonight I will pass through the heart of Egypt. All the firstborn sons will die in every family in Egypt, from the oldest son of Pharaoh, who sits on his throne, to the oldest son of his lowliest servant girl who grinds the flour. Even the firstborn of all the livestock will die. Then a loud wail will rise throughout the land of Egypt, a wail like no one has heard before or will ever hear again. But among the Israelites it will be so peaceful not even a dog will bark. Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between the Egyptians & the Israelites." The firstborn sons will die.

It's clear Yahweh has already distinguished between Egypt & the Israelites because of God's promise to Abraham & his descendants, but now that demarcation grows more specific & includes a responsibility within the promise. **"...each** family must choose a lamb or a young goat for sacrifice, one animal for each household... They are to take some of its blood & smear it on the sides & top of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the animal." **THIS TIME**, the Israelites have a role to play in God's purpose of setting them free to be his. Yahweh gives them an elaborate celebration & commemoration marking this moment in their lives. **This** is a day to remember. Each year, from generation to generation, you must celebrate it as a special festival to the Lord. *This is a law for all time.*

The soon-to-be-freed Israelites are about to see that **God's** promises are fully received only as they're acted upon. God's promises are meant to be lived, enjoyed, celebrated, remembered...experienced day after day generation after generation & it's **THEN** that they become real & powerful. Like a Christmas present under the tree. It may have your name on it. I may tell you it's yours. But only in receiving that gift & claiming it, enjoying, finding delight in it as it's intended...do you truly & fully have that gift. And notice...The Passover celebration...commemoration...begins **BEFORE** they are set free. **Before** they are free they celebrate that which is to come. And in

fact, the Passover meal which celebrates God fulfilling his promise to break the chains of their bondage so they might be fully his, is how God protects them from the Destroyer who will devastate every family in Egypt. **The** promise is embedded in the Passover celebration & is what guards their homes & preserves their lives.

Remember the first 9 plagues affected only the Egyptians. The Israelites watched as Egypt suffered. But now...within their commemoration of a freedom still to occur is the expectation of obedience – of receiving the promise through the obedience of faith...**On** that night I will pass through the land of Egypt & strike down every firstborn son & firstborn male animal in the land of Egypt. I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the Lord! But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying. **When I see the blood, I will pass over you.** This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt. If a doorframe is unmarked by the slain lamb's blood, death strikes. Live in faith & live. Within their celebration of a freedom yet to come is the expectation of obedience – of receiving the promise through the obedience of faith...

**These** are your instructions for eating this meal: Be fully dressed, wear your sandals, & carry your walking stick in your hand. Eat the meal with urgency, for this is the Lord's Passover. The entire "liturgy" of the meal is one of anticipation...being dressed for travel...eating like you're already on the road...the slain lamb's blood over the doorposts...These also are signs to your neighbours; Egyptian & Hebrew alike that from tonight life will never be the same...in this moment God is doing something like never before & no one is exempt...

We've said over & over again that the Exodus always points us straight to Jesus. **Jesus** said, "I tell you the truth, those who hear my word & believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life." - John 5:24 To hear, to trust, to believe is to have now the salvation which is still to be fulfilled in the future. Just like on that fateful night in Egypt there are only two alternatives...obedient faith leading to life or rebellion against God which yields death. **For** God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time...For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy. – Heb 10:11& 14 First with a lamb, then with the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," God does something like never before & no one is exempt...the lamb's blood marks you as his own...

In this incredible moment, God says, "I want you how to celebrate & remember this promise that I haven't fully kept for you yet, for in the celebration you experience now what is yours forever."

But notice too that this celebration is worship...It is the full offering of heart, mind & strength in confident faith, hope, & obedience in anticipation of God transforming one's very existence... *This is a day to remember. Each year, from generation to generation, you must celebrate it as a special festival to the Lord. This is a law for all time.* Seven times God had declared to Pharaoh, "Let my people go so they may worship me...so they may tune their hearts & lives to me...so they may respond to my grace in obedient faith..." We remember & celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, & special occasions like ANZAC Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>...I had someone tell me this week how many days it had been since they last drank alcohol (I think they're in a recovery program Praise God!) How else would you remember your salvation if not by worship? How else would you give thanks for freedom & protection from all that enslaves, from all that threatens, & from all that diminishes, distorts, or destroys life in you if not by worship? And consider this...What danger do we face if we do not build into our lives generation to generation the habits, rhythms, & practice of worship that remembers God's salvation?

But what happens when we live out the promise...when we celebrate the promise as it is fulfilled in us...when we praise God even for that which isn't yet fulfilled? We didn't read this earlier... *Exodus 12:37-38 - That night the people of Israel left Rameses & started for Succoth. There were about 600,000 men, plus all the women & children. A vast rabble of non-Israelites went with them, along with great flocks & herds of livestock.* When God's people live in obvious obedient faith...when we, as the people of God remember, celebrate, & claim God's promises & enjoy life to the full in whatever this world throws at us...the vast rabble around us will want to join in. You & I are called by God to live his promises that are already fulfilled anticipating those yet to be so & reveal to those around us who God is & how vast is his love for us AND what a difference his love power provision & protection makes in our lives. God calls you into the protection of his promise as you simply do what he calls you to do in order to reveal the greatness & majesty of his name.

#### **TAKE IT HOME -**

How will you celebrate & share  
what the Lamb of God is doing in your life this week?

Let's pray with that in mind...

"Lord, do whatever you need to do *IN* us, so you can do whatever you want to do *THROUGH* us so that all whom we know in this city & beyond might be called into the embrace of your love, the fullness of your power & the joy of your purpose...through Jesus Christ...Amen.