

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

February 13 – Exodus 14: 1 – 20

The Red Sea crossing gives us some very powerful insights into the God we worship. Today we will look at just one that we find in verses 4, 17, and 18. As we look at these verses, we see that God's purpose in all of this is that He would gain glory. But what does that really mean? Sometimes when we read verses like this we fall into our own human thinking and think that God is a self-centered egotist always worried that He gets the glory, but before we think that we should remember what the word glory really means as it is used in the Bible. The Hebrew word for glory means that something is heavy or weighty—it has importance. When you think about who God is—the creator and sustainer of our lives—is there anything or anyone more important than Him? Is there anything that should carry more weight than He does in our lives? God's desire for His glory is really for our benefit; that we recognize His absolute importance in our lives. Isn't that really what God is trying accomplish through this Red Sea crossing? Isn't He trying to get Israel's attention, and make sure that they know that He is the true and living God that should be the center of their very existence? Now just as God gave the Israelites all the evidence they needed to make God their center of their existence, by bringing Israel from death to life through the Red Sea crossing, shouldn't the way that Christ has brought us from death to life through the cross do the same for us?

Just a quick side note, but this event clearly did make an impression on both Israel (it's mentioned over and over again in the Old Testament), but also in the nations that they would soon drive out of the Promised Land. 40 years later, when Israel is finally ready to enter the land, and they send spies into Jericho, this is what Rahab a resident of Jericho says to the spies:

Joshua 2:9-10 *"I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. ¹⁰ We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt*

The cross does the same for us. The cross was the means by which Jesus was glorified.

John 12:23-24 *Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.*

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As we look at the cross and think of the sacrifice that Christ has made for us, is there anything else we should glory in? Is there anything else that should even begin to compete to be the center of our lives?

Galatians 6:14 *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

February 14 – Exodus 13: 17 – 22, 14: 19 - 20

Yesterday we saw that all of this drama at the edge Red Sea took place so that God would be glorified, both in Israel and in the entire world, and we saw the importance of Christ being the center of our lives. Today as we consider another aspect of this same account we can see why we need Christ to be the center of our lives. As the Israelites left Egypt, it is clear that they had no clue where they were going. They needed a leader to show them the way—to guide them to their new home. Moses was a great leader, but they needed someone greater than him. In verses 20-22 of chapter 13, we see who was leading them—it was the LORD (Yahweh), himself. By day the LORD appeared in front of them as a cloud. The cloud was not only a visible form for them to follow, but it also shaded them from the scorching desert sun.

Psalms 121:5-6 *The LORD watches over you-- the LORD is your shade at your right hand; ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.*

At night they were led by a pillar of fire, and once again this was not just a visible form for them to follow, it also provided light in the darkness, and heat to warm them from the cold night air of the desert.

But this pillar of cloud and fire didn't just lead the Israelites, it also defended them and protected them, as the Egyptians prepared to attack them. Imagine how the Israelites felt as they stood on the banks of the Red Sea with nowhere to run and nowhere to hide, and the Egyptians coming ever closer to them. They were unarmed and defenseless against the most powerful army of its day. But look at verses 19 and 20, just when it seems that all hope is lost, the angel of God, and the pillar of fire moved from in front of the Israelites to the rear of the Israelites. All night long, the angel and the pillar shielded them from the Egyptian army. In fact, verse 20 tells us that the pillar brought darkness to the side of the Egyptians and light to the side of the Israelites—light that would allow them to prepare to move when God told them to cross over.

In a very real way the pillar of cloud and fire points us to the work of Christ. Jesus is the one who leads us on our spiritual journey to the

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Promised Land of our eternal rest. In fact, the writer of Hebrews calls Jesus the forerunner who has gone before us and entered the inner sanctuary of heaven—the very throne room of God.

Hebrews 6:19-20 *We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.*

But Jesus doesn't just lead us to heaven, he protects and defends all along the way.

Romans 8:31-39 *What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

February 15 – Exodus 14: 21 – 31

As Moses stretches out his hand the water of the sea parts and the Israelites walk across on dry ground, then Moses stretches out his hand again and the water sweeps the Egyptian army away. The Israelites were free. They crossed over from slavery to freedom, and from what seemed to be certain death to new life. Paul uses the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites to express truths concerning our salvation through the outstretched arms of Jesus Christ on the cross.

1 Corinthians 10:1-2 *For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*

What Paul is saying is that all those Israelites who crossed the Red Sea on dry ground became identified with Moses. They became part of a new nation—the nation of Israel. Once they crossed the sea they were

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no longer part of the Kingdom of Egypt, they had been baptized into a new kingdom, the Kingdom of Israel, with new hope and new future.

The same is true for us. Through Christ's outstretched arms on the cross we leave the kingdom of Satan, we leave our bondage to sin and death, and we are baptized into a new kingdom—the Kingdom of Heaven, and a new life.

Romans 6:2-11 *We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

February 16 – Exodus 15: 22 – Exodus 16: 3

In many ways, the people of Israel are an Old Testament picture of our lives today, and there is much we can learn about ourselves as we consider their wilderness journey to the Promised Land. As you read this passage, there is one thing that stands out, and it is this: the way the people of Israel complained about what God was doing. They are just days into their journey, just days from seeing God's miracles in the plagues against Pharaoh and Egypt, just days from seeing the Red Sea part, so they could walk across on dry land. God was visibly in their presence in the pillar of smoke and fire that went before them. The pillar of fire is leading them to a new home in the Promised Land—a land that is flowing with milk and honey. But even with all of that, they start to complain at the first sign of trouble. First there is no water, and then the food runs out. What is their first reaction? Look at verse 3 of chapter 16. Their first reaction is to complain, and not only to complain, but to desire to go back to Egypt. In fact, they make the statement that they would rather have food to eat as slaves in Egypt, than to have freedom and a land of their own as they deal with these trials in the wilderness.

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Now stop and think about our spiritual journey. If you are a Christian, a miracle has occurred in your life. You have been raised from death to life through the work of the Holy Spirit and the power of the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 2:1-5 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved.*

Just as God freed Israel from the slavery in Egypt, Jesus has freed us from our slavery to sin.

Romans 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin*

Like the Israelites, we are also on our way to the Promised Land.

Revelation 21:3-4 *"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

We too are led by the presence of God in our lives.

Romans 8:14 *those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

Ephesians 1:13-14 *Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory.*

But unfortunately, we are also like the Israelites in one other way. We too tend to complain when we go into our own wilderness. In our own way we too desire to go back to Egypt. How often do we look at the world and wish we could be more like them. Just as Israel was called to walk by faith, so are we.

Hebrews 10:35-39 *So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. ³⁶ You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. ³⁷ For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. ³⁸ But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." ³⁹ But we*

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are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

February 17 – Exodus 16: 4 – 35

It is estimated that there were well over 1 million Israelites that were part of the exodus from Egypt. The food that they brought with them soon ran out, and in the wilderness there wasn't much food to be found. In some ways it is understandable that as they got hungry they would complain and grumble, and wonder where their next meal was going to come from. Wouldn't we tend to do the same if we were in their shoes? But as always, God had a plan for how He was going to feed them. God's plan was to literally rain bread down from heaven. It fell like dew every morning, except for the Sabbath, and for forty years it sustained them as they journeyed in the wilderness. In fact, as you read the Book of Joshua, the manna stopped the day they entered the Promised Land. This bread from heaven sustained them physically until they entered the Promised Land.

In John's Gospel, Jesus connects himself to this bread from heaven. After Jesus miraculously fed over 5,000 people with just five loaves of bread and two small fish, the very next day the crowds came and clamored for him to do it again. After all, who doesn't like to get a free lunch?

John 6:30-35 *So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?"³¹ Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"³² Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven."³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."³⁴ "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."³⁵ Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.*

Just as Israel had to completely depend on God for their physical survival as they wandered in the desert, we also must depend completely on Christ for our spiritual well being. The forgiveness and the righteousness that he gives us by way of the cross are the only hope we have. The more we feed on what Christ has done for us on the cross, the more nourished our spirits will be. Just as Israel had no hope

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for survival without the bread from heaven, we have no hope for eternity without Jesus—the Bread of Life.

February 18 – Exodus 17: 1 – 7

As we come to this next account in the book of Exodus, we see yet another picture of Christ. We'll revisit this picture in greater detail when we come to Numbers 20, which is the second time Moses was told by God to bring water out of a rock. Both of these instances are important Old Testament stories because they point us to pictures of Christ. In this instance, the people of Israel are thirsty, and are once again complaining. To satisfy their thirst, God tells Moses to approach the rock at Horeb and strike it with his rod. As Moses does this, water flows from the rock, and not just a trickle of water, but a great gush of water that was enough to quench the thirst of over one million Israelites. It was a miraculous inexhaustible flow of water that quenched their thirst.

Once again, we can see a clear connection between this event and Jesus, because the New Testament makes the connection for us.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ² They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³ They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴ and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

What does Paul mean when he says Jesus is the spiritual rock that accompanied them? In the Psalms, David uses this metaphor to describe God:

Psalm 62:5-6 Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

Think about the agitated state the Israelites must have been in as they became more and more thirsty. Think how hope would have seemed to have evaporated. And then think about how all of that changed when Moses struck the rock and water poured out. Hope returned, calm returned, and they were saved from death. Where does our rest come from? Isn't it from Jesus and what Jesus did on the cross? Isn't our hope found in what Christ has done for us? Jesus is the rock of our salvation. Jesus is the rock that was struck for us, and when he was struck there on the cross living water poured out of him to refresh our souls.

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John 4:10-14 *"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."...."Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

February 19 – Exodus 17: 8 – 16

This would be Israel's first battle as a nation. Can you imagine the anticipation and fear as they got word that the Amalekites were gathering to attack them? Would they be victorious? Moses does his best to make sure that Israel will be victorious. He goes up on a hill overlooking the battlefield and he raises his hands to heaven. What was the significance of Moses doing this? It was an act of prayer, an act of relying on God alone for the victory. As long as Moses' arms were stretched out in prayer the battle went for Israel, as his arms grew tired and began to drop to his sides, Israel began to experience defeat. Just as Moses' stretched out his arms to bring his people victory, Jesus stretched out his arms for us. His outstretched arms on the cross gave us victory over Satan, sin, and death.

1 Corinthians 15:54-58 *"Death has been swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

As Israel saw their leader with his arms outstretched to heaven, they were encouraged to stand firm and fight the good fight. As we see Jesus with his arms outstretched on the cross for us, we too must be encouraged to stand firm in our faith and fight the good fight.

1 Corinthians 15:57-58 *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you.*

Just as Moses interceded for his people to bring them to victory, Jesus intercedes for us to bring us to victory.

Romans 8:33-34 *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*