

May 11, 2014 “Two Ways To Look At It” Exodus 14:10-18

The inspiration if you will, for this miniseries on Exodus 14 came from a Bible Study that I led, that lasted a little over a year. It was called “The Story”. Notice that. Not the stories....although we looked at a different story from the Bible each week for a more than a year. It was called “The Story”. Singular. One story. The Story of God’s Redeeming Love. Each week’s episode was introduced by a speaker, courtesy of modern technology, with us by DVD. The speaker, Randy Frazee, a pastor in Austin Texas, continually used the terms....the upper story, as opposed to the lower story. The upper story is the Biblical content that tells us about God and what God is doing. The lower story is the story of mankind, including you and me.

What is unique about the Bible is its insistence that you can never really understand either story unless you take them both seriously. The part of the story that reveals God to us only happens as we seek to hear it, know it, and receive at God’s hands. The part of the story that draws back the curtain so that we can really begin to grasp what is going on in the world, in our world and indeed in our lives only has the power to change us, if we are willing to hear that we are not alone, but children, the beloved creation, of a loving God.

I simply share with you the additional insight that the balance of the world, makes up a hostile environment for those who take the story of God's redeeming love seriously. On the one hand, folks who do not believe are pretty much convinced we have a screw loose, or that the metal is warped from the screw being way too tight. The balance of human society just does not take God seriously, and perhaps even more to the point could care less what we think or have to say. Their irreverence is perhaps best summed up in seeing us and the church in which we participate as irrelevant.

Even inside the church there is a surprising tendency to want to explain all the details as though human logic is perfect and undeniable. That I hold 3 degrees including a doctorate means I have invested very heavily in the attempt to understand. Knowledge is important. Logic has its place. But here is the key or for some the rub...the deeper we invest in the adventure of faith...the more faith is required of us. The bottom line is that God did not call us to understand. He called us to believe. He called and calls us to believe in Him. To believe in Him and share the journey with believers, and those who are willing to give faith in Him a "shot".

The portion of Exodus 14 I read this morning begins with a noticeable absence of faith. The Egyptians are on the warpath. They intend to convince some portion of the released

Hebrew slaves to return to Egypt and slavery by killing a portion of them. They are engaged in an all out martial exercise. The Hebrews are terrified. They see their pursuers. It is obvious they have not come out into the Sinai to talk. If they have their way blood will run in the sand of the wilderness. The survivors will regain their status as the servants of Egyptian overlords. People are terrified.

And while the Scripture says they cried to the Lord, it is not talking about a prayer meeting. They address Moses. Moses who speaks for God. Moses whom God saved from a charge of murder, and the perils of the desert. Moses to whom God gave a new life in the camp of his wife's people, where he found humble work and began to raise a family. Moses to whom God spoke from the midst of a burning bush. A bush consumed in the flames of inextinguishable fire, and yet neither were the leaves reduced to cinders, nor the trunk to coals and ash. And God did not just have a discussion with Moses, He claimed Moses for an impossible mission. To lead God's people to freedom, from centuries of slavery.

The Hebrews cried out to God by addressing Moses. "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What did we say to you in Egypt Moses? We said leave us alone! It would have been better for us to serve in Egypt, than to die in the desert!" They are not

acting and they are not speaking as believers. They can see the the Egyptian chariots. They can see the divisions of the Egyptian army. They can see there is no force on the battle field that is going to take up arms and defend them. They can see the the waters that they cannot cross. They can see there is no way to escape. They are surrounded. They are outgunned. It is hopeless.

One of the reasons the story of the Exodus from Egypt resonates with us is that we have been there. We have lived through moments when we could see only the signs of our impending discomfort and dwelling on the rim of the circumstance of disaster, we could see no way out. Our own limitations cried out against us.

In Exdus 14 it is the voice of Moses which answers, "Do not be afraid." They have reasons to be afraid! Moses says, "Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring to you today. The Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." The KJV translates this verse in this way..."the Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." Be quiet. Be still. What is it we find in the 46<sup>th</sup> Psalm? Verse 10. "Be still, and know that I am God." And by the way it does not make any difference what translation you turn to, in our pew Bibles, in the KJV. "Be still and know that I am God."

The Hebrews are about to see the impossible occur. They are surrounded. They are hemmed in by the waters with no way of escape. And in spite of what they have said....they are not going to die. And these legions of chariots and charioteers, the horses, the riders...are about to be swept from history, while the defenceless will not only be defended, they will be saved and safe on dry ground. If you look for only what man can do against the elements and even his own vicious kind, there will be no way to understand what happens here. It will be gibberish, except that you see and understand God is real. God is present. And God is in command. Not Pharoah. Not the generals. God who made heaven and earth and you too. He gave you into your mother's arms. He ordered your footsteps, even in the worst of times so that you would come through. So that you would see more than the creation. So that you would know the Lord of Life in the Lord Jesus...and live, and live.

Barbara and her brother Ken have just returned from Thunder Bay. You have heard some of the details. Their youngest brother Doug has lung cancer. We did not believe he would live to see Thanksgiving. When he did one doctor told Barbara he certainly would not make it to Easter. They are now saying he could be gone next month....or maybe 10 years from now. The cancer is still present. Doug is very weak. But the cancer is not in remission...it seems to be dormant. Please keep

praying for him. I am not trying to tell you I know how this is going to settle out. But whether Doug knows it or not it is becoming apparent God is involved. I can't deny that. And I won't.

In verse 15 of Exodus 14 God speaks to Moses. His command is "Tell the Israelites to move on." It is like that scene in "Lord of the Rings" when Gandolf the wizard is hanging on by his fingernails, and peering over the edge of the chasm says shouts to his fellow travelers, "Run you fools!" Where could the Hebrews run? Toward the water? There is no way out, that they can see.

God's direction to Moses is that the people are to run. Moses is to stand. To raise His staff above his head. To stretch his arm toward the sea. The water will divide. A dry way will be seen. The Egyptian troops will also see, the waters curling back, the solidity of the footing, the Hebrews escaping. In fact the Egyptians will decide that if it is safe for the Hebrews, it is safe for them to pursue the Hebrews. Mistake. It is not just the east wind that causes the waters to divide. It is not just the angel of God that guards the path the Hebrews follow. God is present and in the midst of this people and their circumstances. And the Egyptians will recognize that truth only as they are swept away.

There are two ways to look at the story. One has to do with people and power and politics and building an economy with a whip. The other has to do with the God who does miraculous things. Who opens eyes so that people can see His presence and believe. So that they might actually want to Hold to God's unchanging hand. The words of that old hymn....Trust in Him who will not leave you/ Whatsoever years may bring/ If by earthly friends forsaken/ Still more closely to Him Cling/ Hold to God's unchanging hand/ Build your hopes on things eternal/ Hold to God's unchanging hand.

Let us pray;

Lord God, Redeemer of the peoples, grant that as we continue our throughout this day and into the unforeseen perimeters of time we might be conscious of your presence, you power, your Spirit, your Son Jesus Christ. Give us eyes to see, and faith sufficient for each moment and its challenges.  
Amen