

Exodus



We are journeying through the book 'The Bible - A Story that makes sense of life today' and here we are Week 3.

Exodus: A story of suffering, deliverance and a journey of hope.

Above all else, though, Exodus is the story of **'Freedom'**. Slaves are set free. People like us, women like us, men like us, children like us, are set completely free.

We read these familiar stories year after year, but how often do we stop and consider, what do the main themes really teach us, over 3,000 year later?

Freedom, is challenging to describe, it obviously, on one hand is the liberation from slavery or, from the power of another, it's release from prison, or bondage, or cramped quarters into an open land where one can breathe and move about.

For me, this sort of freedom is found in one of my favourite films: *The Sound of Music*, (and a young woman who will never be a nun!) the Von Trapp family escape the Nazis at the Salzburg festival and, with some car sabotage from Maria's friends at the Abbey, successfully escape over the Swiss alps to freedom.

Exodus though, tells a different story, a better one, freedom means more than just escaping oppressive control of the Nazi's or Pharaoh. It also means freedom from traps that are much more subtle: an oppressive boss, a miserable relationship, illness, debt, or we could be imprisoned by anxiety, anger, or toxic habits that we can't break away from.

In the 1980s, the song by Queen '[I want to break free](#)'! demonstrated a plea for freedom.

Alongside the freedom narrative in Exodus, we find people discovering who they are, who their God is, and the kind of lives they were to live.

So, let's recap this exciting story,

The drama includes: the reluctant hero Moses hearing God voice from a burning bush, ten plagues, lambs slaughtered and their blood applied to doors, walking on dry ground through the middle of the sea, bread raining down from heaven, ten commandments and so much more. In total, it covers a period of about 80 years! and no surprise we can't cover it all!

Moses, escapes his fate hidden in a basket in the bulrushes, He's taken in by Pharaoh's daughter and grows up in Pharaoh's court. Moses lived a very comfortable life he could have whatever material things he wanted, but found that... Fortune didn't free him.

One day seeing the forced labour of his own people in slavery, he killed an abusive Egyptian. He found that fighting didn't free him.

Moses runs away but he found that running away didn't free him.

After his escape, day after day it was business, as usual, for Moses, in the land of Midian, doing his work looking after sheep, eating his meals, saying his prayers, sleeping.

Then someone calls his name: Moses asks, who are you? The reply:

I am, who I am.

More often than we know, God appears in the uneventful routines of our lives God spoke to Moses through the fire of the burning bush and sends him off to confront Pharaoh saying:

“Let My people go” (**Ex 5:1**). The story of **Redemption** begins:

Pharaoh refuses to set the slaves free, and so God sends those famous 10 plagues upon the Egyptians. They included water turned to blood, frogs, flies, locusts, darkness and the death of the first born. When the last plague kills Pharaoh's son, he finally allows them to leave.

To ensure the Israelites, first born, were kept safe, God told them to take a lamb and sacrifice it. After they had slaughtered it, they were to put some of the blood on the two door posts and the lintel of their house, using a hyssop branch (hold that thought) they were then to eat, with their shoes on ready for the off!

The Passover is still celebrated by Jewish families. It includes a meal that recalls the Exodus event through smell, taste and touch. Bitter herbs and salt water give a taste of oppression and tears; flatbread symbolises their rushed departure without time for the dough to rise, cups of wine share in the celebration of freedom on the other side.

It was freedom from Egypt and freedom **for** the Promised Land. It was the way out **and** the way in.

But....

Pharaoh changes his mind and sends his army to recapture them. It must have been terrifying, there was no escape. Pharaoh's army behind you and only the sea water ahead, no way forward and no way back.

This is the iconic event that demonstrates our need for God's intervention. He miraculously **Rescues** them. Moses holds out his staff and the waters' part. The Israelites walk through on dry ground.

Now on the other side they need to eat, God chose to feed them in an unexpected way. 'I am going to rain bread from heaven each day'. Manna was provided - they trusted it, ate it and lived. I think I have said, before, 'expect the unexpected with God'!

Our final R is for **Rules!** God sets out his expectations of how to live as the people of God. They speak wisdom into all areas of life: who we worship, how we work, what we most desire. The 10 commandments were given out of love. Grace always comes first; when you think about it the sea crossing came before the 10 commandments.

Exodus was not just coming out of Egypt; it was and is embracing a new way of living.

In this way, Exodus is our story too.

We may not be slaves of Pharaoh, but we all have our own Egypt, tough situations, bereavement, redundancy, illness, loneliness. This past 18 months of the pandemic has reduced our freedom to see family and friends, go shopping, enjoy meals out, attend church.

When we are scared and bound with no obvious way forward or back, God is there parting the waters.

We can leave behind our old ways of living, regrets, anxiety, stress, fear, toxic habits. We can cross over to the other side. We are free, no longer slaves to these things; we are children of God.

The broken body and blood of Jesus provide a new Passover a new Exodus, the way of freedom not just for a few, but for all. The ultimate Passover lamb, the blood from the door, now on the cross, the wine vinegar lifted to Jesus on a hyssop branch.

This is our manna from heaven, God's provision. When Jesus shared the Passover meal in a shocking moment, he reinterpreted the entire Exodus event. He broke the bread and gave it to his disciples 'Take, eat this is my body', then he took the cup 'Drink this, this is my blood for the forgiveness of sins'.

Going back to the O/T the Israelites became bored with eating manna (Numbers 11: 4 -6) and started complaining to Moses **"we have lost our appetite"** as they craved other food. "If only we had meat to eat, fish, cucumber, melons, leeks and onions, like we had in Egypt".

This has really spoken to me, **don't lose your appetite**, Jan, don't crave something else encourage others to take and eat, the bread of life that satisfies the deepest hunger.

As in the burning bush, God calls our name too, when the great, 'I am, who I am' comes beside us, the same God who redeemed those slaves, can be relied on, to overcome our chains.

And so, we turn our attention to our own lives, it's the same promise for us, isn't it? The story of Exodus resonates deeply with our human quest for freedom. We are led to new beginnings, to freedom, to our Exodus, through the cross, as time and eternity are blended together.

'If the son sets you free you will be free indeed' (John 8:36). Jesus has come to get us out of, *our*, 'Pharaoh's grip,' free from whatever is holding us in chains.

Maybe this week, we could all take stock of our lives and ask ourselves are we living victoriously in Christ's freedom, or are we still living in slavery?

We have seen true liberation that includes, the shedding of blood, the giving of law, the journey of faith.

Jesus is freedom *for* the Promised Land. He is the way out *and* the way in.

Let's listen to the song: No longer slaves

'Love has called my name
I'm no longer a slave
I am a child of God'

Amen.