



God at Work

Exodus 2

As you know, we are teaching through the book of Exodus so open your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 11 this morning as we study Exodus, chapter 2. I'm sure most of us are aware that this afternoon the Super Bowl 50 is going to start between the Denver Broncos and the Carolina Panthers. If you're like me and you're a talk radio person, you know that for the past two weeks, there's been a lot of build up to Super Bowl 50, but yesterday one of the highlights of the week was the choosing of the pro football players who will actually be inducted into the Hall of Fame. And for this entire week, everybody's been questioned whether or not Brett Favre would be a first ballot Hall of Famer. I mean every analyst on every show that I've heard this week is asked the question: "Do you believe Brett Favre is, without a doubt, a first ballot Hall of Famer?" Well if you heard the news yesterday, Brett Favre was elected to the pro football Hall of Fame on the very first ballot. That's big in the life of a pro player. It's something to get in on the third year, or the fourth year, or the fifth year, but to be in that rare group that's called a FIRST ballot Hall of Famer is just something!

Well you guys know this, right? There is actually a 'Hall of Faith', and it's recorded in Hebrews chapter 11. So if you don't mind standing, we're going to stand this morning and we're going to read about a first ballot 'Hall of Faith'. Now I know grammatically, you can't call someone a 'Hall of Faith', but if you're from Western Kentucky then

culturally, you can call someone a 'Hall of Faither' because everybody that's from Western Kentucky will know what you're talking about. Now if you're an international student, or if you're actually from England and you speak the King's English, I apologize.

When I call Moses a 'Hall of Faither', what we're meaning is he is a person who is in the Hebrew 'Hall of Faith'. I don't think God had a second or a third thought as He was leading the writer of Hebrews to pen this letter. He was using examples to a church that was struggling, that was being persecuted, to use this man named Moses. But what's neat about the verses we're going to read this morning in the Hebrews 'Hall of Faith', is they actually summarize Exodus chapter 2 really quickly. Now that doesn't mean the sermon's going to be really quick, but the sermon is not from Hebrews chapter 11. The sermon is actually from Exodus chapter 2. So as soon as we read, pray and you sit down, flip your Bibles back to Exodus chapter 2.

Let's read Hebrews first. Hebrews 11:23-26: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward."

Prayer:

"Father, we come before you one more time in prayer, just asking for that special anointing that you give many, many times between us as a speaker and us as a congregation. I'm asking for that afresh. This is your word, not my word. Father you know I've tried to be diligent, tried to lay down any preconceived ideas I've had approaching this text as we think about your great rescue. So Father, please, anoint me to speak and preach, and anoint our congregation to listen. And let both of us, all of us, be doers of what we say and of what we hear this morning. In your son's name, we pray. Amen."

As you take your seat, I have entitled the message from Exodus Chapter 2, "God at Work." Now you may be surprised because we talked about Moses being a 'Hall of Faither', and it would appear that much of the chapter in Exodus 2 is about Moses... when in reality it's not. It's about God. So therefore, I want you to picture when you're driving down the road and you come to a construction zone. They have one of those yellow signs that says, "Men at Work". You drive through the construction zone, you see the equipment, but you don't see anybody working. There are no 'Men at Work'. A few weeks later, you drive through that same section, and you can tell some things have changed. You see the equipment, you see the improvement, you see the sign "Men at Work," but you don't SEE any men at work. That's kind of how it is with God.

See, if you heard what Kory said last week from Exodus 1, we know where Israel is... but where's God?? Really...an "unstoppable promise?" I mean this seems to be about Joseph. This seems to be about two midwives. This seems to be about Pharaoh. This seems to be about Egypt. This seems to be about Israel. But where is God? Well, here's what I want to say to you. You may not see it yet, but here's something Moses is trying to tell us in Exodus 2. God is at work. God is at work!

I believe, as a church, it's just natural for us to divide this chapter into three sections:

- 1) Verses 1 through 10
- 2) Verses 11 through 22
- 3) Verses 23 through 25

And I think when you do that, and you back up from the text, then you really get what Moses is trying to write here. Now isn't this cool? Moses is writing this about himself, but he's not using first person. He's using third person under the leadership of God's Holy Spirit. He's kind of 'stepping out of' the situation, and writing about what happened. But he's doing it from an objective perspective. That's cool I think!

See, I give you the title "God at Work," but here's the theme: 'He rescued HIM before he rescued THEM'. Can you see that? Would you read that with me? 'God rescued him before he rescued them.' Now we're approaching this from a Christian perspective, so here's what we know. We know who 'him' is. 'Him' is Moses. And we know who 'them' are. They are Israel. I want you to remember this. Exodus chapter 2 is painting this picture: God IS at work. What's God doing? He's rescuing HIM before he rescues THEM.

Boy, that's going to be an encouragement to US. See, some of you are praying for people to be rescued. You've got a group of friends, you've got a family, and you've got a community. Maybe there's a sorority, maybe there's a fraternity, or maybe there's a company. And you're wondering why God 'isn't'. Oh he IS. It just may be that at this very moment, he's rescuing the rescuer... because he ALWAYS rescues the rescuer before he rescues those who are going to be rescued. Because when God rescues, he chooses to use someone like you and me. And he works in their life to get THEM ready for what he is getting them ready for, which ultimately isn't about them at all. It's not about the singular person... it's about the group. Is that just cool, or is that cool?

So what we're going to see in Exodus 2 is God rescuing Moses. And if you follow my outline, here's what the outline is going to be:

A) In verses 1 through 10, God rescues Moses from Pharaoh.
B) In verses 11 through 22, God's going to rescue Moses from himself. (Please take note of that, because that just surprised some of you. See, some of us just haven't got this yet. Yes, God rescued you from what was without. If I'm going to be honest with you, it didn't take him very long to do that. But you know where He's at now? He's rescuing you from YOU. Because many times what you think is the problem, really isn't the problem. You just might be the answer to somebody's prayer. And God's going to leave them where they are long enough to get you ready to be the rescuer.)

C) And then we come to the last section: verses 23 through 25, which kind of seem like 'Whoa, this was just thrown in there.' No. This is a billboard! This is a flashing sign!

Ultimately, God is the rescuer of Israel, not Moses. You say 'Hold it Brother Ricky, you just told us Moses was the rescuer!' I did. But he's not the ULTIMATE rescuer. He is the person that God is using to rescue Israel from Egypt, BUT he's just the person in God's hands. Does that make sense?

Now if you study Acts chapter 7, here's what you're going to understand. Stephen gives a really good summary of Moses' life. And from that summary, here's what we know: Chronologically in age, we can divide Moses' life into three periods of 40 years: The first forty, the second forty, and the third forty. Stephen is actually going to tell us that before he was a grown man, went out into the field, and saw what was happening, he'd been in Egypt in the palace for forty years. (Now, that is taking off a few years while he was still at home with momma.) And then when he killed the Egyptian, it was premeditated murder. It wasn't an accident. It wasn't manslaughter. He looked both ways, killed him, and then hid him in the sand. WOW. Yeah. Oh, you may argue he was trying to do the right thing. I agree, but he did it the wrong way. And it may look like he's running because he's fearful of Pharaoh, but he's running because he's not where he's supposed to be.

See, the next forty years he's supposed to be in the wilderness. And then after that forty years is over, he's going to come back and begin to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Someone said this, 'Moses spent the first forty years of his life thinking he was somebody... in line to be pharaoh possibly, the prince of Egypt. He spent the next forty years of his life realizing he was a nobody, and then on to spend his last forty years to understand God can use anybody.'

I mean, I want you to get this. It took God eighty years to rescue Moses from Pharaoh and himself... to use him the last forty years of his life. Now, I want you to think about this. Do you know what that meant for the people he was going to rescue? They stayed in slavery for EIGHTY YEARS during this. Whoa! Yes, God's working on you, and he's working on me. But let's be mindful while he's working on us to be a rescuer, the person we're going to rescue is still in their

bondage. They are still in their oppression. You see what's happening to them, but you don't see what's happening to YOU. Oh, you continue to pray for God to. You may be the person that's going to answer the prayer.

I have built my life around the principle of Moses' life. I just kind of figured it like this. Eighty of one hundred and twenty... would that be two-thirds? Two-thirds of his life was getting ready to do what he was going to do. Now, I just kind of applied that to me. If I live to be, let's say eighty that means God's going to take the life I've lived fifty-five years just to be ready for the rest of my life. But I live in a country that says 'Whoa, you've got to start slowing down! You're getting old! You deserve to be able to quit doing what you're doing, and live somewhere else for a while. You need to turn it over.' Are you kidding me? Why would I want to retire and quit within a few years, when God perhaps is getting me ready ultimately for what I'm ready for? And that's the rest of my ministry!

Now this isn't about Brother Ricky being a Moses. This is about Brother Ricky being a rescuer like Moses was a rescuer. But you are a rescuer too if you are a child of God. Boy, the tunnel vision is 'Wow, I've finally arrived. I'm where I'm supposed to be. God did all this!' Nooooo. You still haven't arrived yet. And if I can just say this, tongue in cheek, the people God is going to want you to rescue need YOU to get serious, and understand the rescued will not be rescued until the rescuer is rescued. Amen? If I don't quit preaching, I'm going to need fifteen more minutes, and we just don't have that built into the schedule.

Alright, let's look at this. I just have to be honest with you. I'm a papaw, and I talk a lot to Memish. We look at what's going on around us, and we pray really hard for Kory, Katie, and our grandkids. I can't tell you how many times we make this statement: 'So glad we were rearing our kids thirty years ago instead of today because it would be tough to raise kids in this day and age.' There's a part of me (the fleshly part) that would say 'Hey couples, quit having kids! It's bad out there!' NO! NO!

Yes, it's bad now, but it isn't as bad as it was in Egypt. In Egypt, they were living under government that says when a boy is born, ANYBODY, (not just the political authorities) ANYBODY can 'take any Hebrew boy into the river, into the lake, into the Nile, and drown him.' And all of the sudden, a man, and a women conceive. I don't believe it was an accident. I believe Hebrews 11 says what it says because Moses' parents had faith to believe and conceive, and then ultimately achieve what God wanted them to achieve in the life of their little boy. This was because they had more faith in God than they had fear in Pharaoh. {And can I just say this as a side note during this political season? Some of you need to exercise more faith in God than you do fear of our political system.}

So you know what happens. This is ironic. I just love this. You know what irony is, right? Here's a pharaoh on the throne, he passed a law that basically says 'Beware of boys. Beware of men. They're the real deal. Boy they can hurt us.' I mean at one time Egypt had a very friendly immigration policy. They accepted the immigrants, and they loved that family. That family actually saved them from starvation. And all of the sudden now the new administration says, 'No we're going to be really mean to the immigrants. We don't really want them here. They're getting larger than us. They're multiplying. They're being fruitful.' Well you know the three plans pharaoh tried to implement. And it was all because 'men, you're the problem. Girls on the other hand; we like for the little girls to be born.' See, the girls were no threat to him. So they could live.

So could you imagine carrying Moses in your womb, praying for a girl, but it's a boy? Here's what I love. In Exodus chapter 2, God rescues Moses from Pharaoh, but he uses three women, no men. I LOVE IT! Guys, we're not as important as we thought we were! To show the men in Egypt who he was, God took those he didn't see as a problem and used them to rescue the man who he would ultimately use to set his people free. Listen to this. He used the MOMMA. He used the SISTER. And he used the DAUGHTER. Ladies, I'm sorry, but it doesn't get any plainer than that. You know what our culture would do is to spin this to where you ladies no longer feel good about being a mother or a daughter or a sister. Our culture would say 'No, we

have to find our identity in something else.' No, because you know what I believe? I believe God still uses the women in the life of the one He's rescuing who is ultimately going to be the rescuer of the big group.

Now, we're going to give a lot of credit to the seminary professor, the pastor, and the group, but sometimes we overlook God at work in the life of the mom, in the life of the sister, and in the life of the daughter.

Hey, get this picture. We don't name Amram and Jochebed because they're not the key story here. Yes, they're Levitical in their ancestry, but what Moses is trying to say is 'It doesn't matter who my mom and dad were. What's important is they had faith. And so when I was born, they feared God more than they feared Pharaoh. So they hid me for three months because I was a beautiful child.'

{I've always thought that kind of strange. Does that mean that when a Hebrew lady gave birth to a baby, if the baby was ugly... into the river he went? I mean that's a good excuse to get rid of that ugly baby! I know it wasn't available to you when you had your baby. I love going to the hospital and seeing newborn babies, but I'm going to get asked this question: 'Aw Brother Ricky, isn't she beautiful? Isn't he beautiful?' I have to lie. Hahahaha! I mean babies just look like babies, amen? If that's not true, then tell me how the momma of the momma can bring a baby picture and the baby looks like the momma. But the momma of the daddy can bring a baby picture back home... and the baby looks like the daddy. That's my theory. Babies look like babies.}

Now, get this. Now what's going on here? Well, we don't really know what's going on here, but we know something's going on we're not getting hold of here. And here's what's going on. Beautiful isn't meaning that this baby was physically beautiful to look at, because it also said that the baby was beautiful in God's eyes. This is where beautiful is hard to translate. It's the same word that's translated in Genesis that when God created it and said 'it's good.' So here's what's happening. Here are the parents who are exercising faith. They didn't decide to delay a conception. So they had a baby and when that baby was born, God said 'it's good'. And what we're doing

here is we're linking God the creator to God the redeemer. And I personally just hold this opinion that God by special revelation revealed something to momma of the planned future he had for this baby, and she hid him for three months. But there came a time when she couldn't hide him anymore, so do you know what she did? She put him in the river, no trying to get him out of the country. She just put him in the Nile. But she put him in a special place in the Nile. She put him where the bulrushes were. But she didn't just put him in the river. When she put him in the river, she had made {the Hebrew word is an ark} a little ark for him. I wonder where she got that thought...

See, I believe this lady knew the Word. So she built the little ark. She pitches it, and she puts the bitumen on it. In other words, she makes sure that when he goes in whatever he's going to be in, nothing can get in where he is. Does that make sense? That was good. That's really what parenting is all about. It's about the day your child has to be in the river. But when your child goes in the river, your child just doesn't go in the river to let whatever is in the river get into where he is. We so parent our children that we put a protective ark around them so that when they go in the river, they are fully prepared to keep what's out, out, and to keep what's in, in. And she puts him where the bulrushes are.

Now watch this. I do not believe she thought he was going to drown. I do not think she thought someone else was going to look in that ark and drown the baby. I do not believe she thought one of the crocodiles of the Nile was going to eat that baby. Because here's what the Bible says: 'his sister followed from a little distance and watched.' So she would know what was going to happen to her brother. You tell me a momma who would let an older sister go down to the bank of the river if they thought someone was going to drown her little brother. There's no mom on earth who would let that happen. Amen? If this momma believed a crocodile was going to eat him, she would not have let Miriam (probably 11 to 12 years of age) watch. No. She put him in the care of God, BUT she did everything she could do first.

And you know what happens! Now I don't know about you, but I just don't believe when Pharaoh's daughter showed up to bathe that this was the first time she'd ever come there to bathe. You ladies don't normally bathe in a different part of the river every time you go bathe. I mean you have a place to hang everything. I mean you have to have a place to hang your makeup bag... I mean am I right? Now I know scripture doesn't tell it, but get this picture. They put this baby where Pharaoh's daughter is going to be. Because what does momma know? Momma knows if God used HER, then he's probably going to use another woman. So he is in the bulrushes, and then here comes Pharaoh's daughter. Well you know a three month old. You can't keep them from crying. So he's crying, and they look and immediately she says 'Ohhh, it's a Hebrew baby boy!' And she had pity.

You do know this, right? Sometimes those who make the decisions in government... all those under that law don't always believe it's a just law. So the man in the office may think what he just decreed is right, but sometimes even those in his family know it's not right. And pharaoh's daughter, instead of turning her head and having her maidservants drowned that baby... she didn't. Did you ever wonder why she knew it was a Hebrew? I mean do you think maybe the complexion was just enough different that you could tell an Egyptian from a Jewish person? I don't know about you, but they look a whole lot alike. Have you ever thought that maybe the very fact that a baby is in the Nile River with this law would probably tell you that an Egyptian wouldn't put their baby in a boat and float him down the river at three months of age? So that was a pretty good indicator.

But have you ever thought about this? When they pulled the cover off that ark, and picked that baby up... 'Yep, Hebrew.' You don't get it. Hebrew families circumcise their boys. Obviously, this isn't an Egyptian boy... it's a Hebrew boy. Now, I don't know about you, but if I'd been Moses' mom and I was going to put him in the river... I wouldn't have circumcised him. That way, if he's floating down the river, and he's not circumcised... guess what; they're going to think he's an Egyptian. But she believed in the unstoppable promise of God. Why? Because she knew, and here's what Exodus 2 is trying to

tell us, she believed in a covenant keeping God. So what she does here is rooted in God.

And then you know the story. Can you imagine Pharaoh afraid of a little boy, and now he's paying for the rescuer to be raised by momma! Does God have a sense of humor, or does He have a sense of humor? Amen? A momma gives her baby up, gets the baby back, and now gets PAID to do what she'd gladly do for nothing! Wow! Well, that'd really be cool. If you lived in a society that so prized motherhood, that we actually paid moms to get to stay home and raise their babies rather than having to send them somewhere else to be raised... But that's another story.

Moses grows up. At forty years of age, he knows who he is because his momma who weaned him knew who he was, and his momma who raised him knew who he was. He's a Hebrew. And so buddy, when he walked out in the field and he saw the Egyptian being mean to his brother (I'm not talking about Aaron. I'm just talking about one of his kinfolk.) He did what he thought he'd been called to do... and that was "deliver." He knew he was a deliverer, but he did it from the perspective of a 'prince' because he'd been educated in Egypt for forty years. So he killed a man. It was premeditated. He looked both ways to make sure no one was looking, and killed him. He hid him in the sand.

Can I just say this? Especially to you college kids...sometimes in our youth, we think the only thing that matters is to do the right thing, but it's actually possible to do the right thing the wrong way. Can I say this to you parents? You sometimes think that the main thing is to do the right thing, but you don't understand that the thing you're trying to do right, you're doing all wrong. So you can do the right thing in the wrong way. Did everybody get that?

So you know what happens... forty more years of education. See it's not enough just to know who you are and what you're supposed to do. You've got to know HOW to do what you're supposed to do because of WHO you are. And it took Moses going to the wilderness of Midian for forty years because God's going to take him out of

'theory'. See ,when he was in Egypt he got taught mathematics, he got taught art, he got taught architecture, he got taught strategy, and he got taught politics. I think that's cool how God used all of that later in his life in the book of Exodus. There is a value to what we can learn from the world, but we who are Christians don't operate the way the world operates. Did you catch that?

So here's what happens. He goes out into the wilderness to learn the way of Yahweh. Because here's what Moses thought. Remember, the Hebrews said to him 'Who made you prince over us?' Yeah, at forty years of age all he knew how to do was be a prince. Princes deliver. But here was the problem. God wasn't going to use a prince to deliver his people out of Egypt. God was going to use a shepherd. Well you know where you learn to be a shepherd, right? You just have to put your boots on, you don't take a bath, and you just get out there where the sheep and the goats are. And isn't this amazing that when he gets to Midian, he sits down by the well, and he meets seven sisters who have to wait until the end of the day because the shepherds keep driving them off. Well, old Moses, he's a deliverer... so what does he do? He delivers! And you know who they think he is? They think he's an Egyptian. When they got home earlier than usual, dad said 'Hey, how did y'all get home so early?' And they said 'Well, there was an Egyptian who delivered us from the shepherds.' He said 'Man, you were rude! You didn't invite that man home?'

Then the Bible says Moses was content to dwell with this shepherd and his seven daughters. And you know what he learned for forty years? He got married, gave birth to two children, and he learned how to handle sheep. He learned how to handle goats. And he learned the topography of the land of Midian. Why is this important? It's important because for the last forty years of his life, he's going to go right back to where he is. And while he's there, he's learning the lay of the land, and he's learning the psychology of sheep so that he'll know the psychology of God's people. In other words, if you really want to know how to pastor a Baptist church... just raise you some livestock. There's not a whole lot of difference. Yeah. Sheep stink. (Some of you stink.) Sheep are gullible. Sheep are stubborn. Grass is always greener on the other side. Oh, sheep really like to get

to one place and not move! Yeah, ☺ See God not only had to rescue Moses from pharaoh, he also had to rescue him from himself. He had to train him.

And here's how chapter 2 ends. That pharaoh dies. Now guess what people do after that pharaoh dies? They start praying and crying out for help. Guess what the bible says; 'God heard, God remembered, God saw, and God knew. He knew when they'd be ready to be rescued. Oh, they thought they were ready eighty years earlier. No they weren't. But they are now, and guess what he's been doing? He's been getting the answer to their prayer ready.

So here's what Moses is trying to tell us. You know as I tell this in third person about myself, you might think this is about me. He'd have been humbled to think he might have been a 'Hall of Faither'. I say this because I have to believe that when he murdered that man, he thought his life was over. He thought his ministry was over. I have a feeling when he was out there with his sheep; he just thought 'Yep, I deserve this... stinky, smelly sheep.' And he had no idea God was just getting him ready for what he was getting ready for him. And I want to say this to you because some of you think your past has cancelled out your future... NO! No! God's getting you ready for what he's got ready for you. You are a rescuer. It's woven into the DNA of every Christian to be a person God can use to rescue others. He knows. You don't think he does? You don't think he hears? He's at work. He is at work!

Prayer:

"Father, thank you for this opportunity to share this summary of Exodus chapter 2. Father, we had a tendency today to get outside the box a little bit because this passage just gives us a lot of freedom to go into a lot of different areas. And I almost went down some roads I shouldn't have gone down today. That doesn't mean that it doesn't need to be explored in the future... today just wasn't the day. So let us come back to the main thought. And that main thought is that you rescued him before you rescued them. So let me see myself as part of a group, but also as an individual to know that you work in

my life to get me ready for what you're getting me ready for. And I don't want to listen to modern culture that says you live your whole life so that the rest of your life can be about yourself. No, the rest of my life is about YOU. And help us see that as a church. Help these young people see this. Help every couple see this. In Your Son's name we pray. Amen."