

Exodus: God's Great Rescue

Worthy of Worship



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Exodus 15:1-27

When I was in the FFA, one of the highlights of my FFA career was getting to attend the National President's Conference in Washington D.C. as the vice president of the Kentucky FFA. Now, most of you guys know me and know that I was raised outside of Dexter, Kentucky. I was raised on the farm and I considered myself a farmer, so it surprised me that the highlight of that trip was when I actually got to go to the famous Ford Theatre there in Washington. I actually got to see a play called Peter Pan. That live play opened my eyes to the creative, artistic world in a way that I had never been introduced before, and because of that, I have an appreciation for the arts. I have an appreciation for those people who are creative in play, who are creative musically, even though that is the very opposite of who I really am. I have an appreciation for a musical called Wizard of Oz. I don't know if you remember this, but about five minutes into that musical, after Dorothy has talked with her parents about the problem between a neighbor and her small dog, Aunt Em gives her the advice that what she really needed to do was find her a place free from trouble. If you remember, Dorothy leaves Aunt Em with that thought in her mind...a place

free from trouble. She begins to muse to herself about a place that would be free from trouble. As she imagines that place, she starts to think about how that place would be behind the moon and then she says over the rainbow, and she begins to sing 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow.' A few years ago, the artistic community voted that song the number one song of all time. Wow! Then, when our family goes to Disney I love the rides, but I love when we go into that Little Mermaid theatre and there is Ariel. All of a sudden, it switches from the narrative to her singing, "Look at this stuff. Isn't it neat?" Then, The Lion King, oh, man! Do you guys love it in the movie version when Simba sings, "I just can't wait to be king!"

This morning, that is the background of Exodus chapter 15. God teaches us that life is not just our narrative, but from time to time, life is like a musical. There is a time when your life needs to just stop and you need to reflect on what God has done for you. When you reflect on what God has done for you, what happens in your heart, what happens in your spirit, and what happens in your soul is a response to Him called worship, and that response includes singing. Let's evaluate a song that the children of Israel sung in Exodus chapter 15. The Hebrew people called this song the 'Song at the Sea.' Now, because of my lack of musical ability, I have struggled this week. There was one time where I thought about calling Matt and saying, "Matt, you are our music pastor. Why do you not preach this morning?" I thought better of that. He needs to stick to singing. Amen? Please don't let my lack of ability to capture this passage cause you to lose sight of what this passage is all about. It is all about worship. We are going to read chapter 15, verse 1, and then chapter 15, verses 19-21 because this gives us the narrative. In between these two narratives is the song that the Hebrew people call the 'Song at the Sea.'

Scripture

***(15:1) "Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea..."
(V. 19-21) "For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and***

his horsemen went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea. Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea."

You have to get this picture. The children of Israel are on *this* side of the sea; they are not on *that* side anymore, they are not in Egypt. Through the Passover event, God led them out of bondage to the Egyptians and He is now leading them to the land of Canaan. He has chosen the route and on the route, there was a sea. By hardening Pharaoh's heart, God actually caused Pharaoh to pursue the children of Israel after letting them go. Now, after God brings them to the Red Sea, He has set a trap for Pharaoh. He opens up the sea and the children of Israel march across on dry ground, Pharaoh's army goes in, God causes the water to come back into its riverbank, and all of Pharaoh's army is drowned. Here are the children of Israel, standing on this side of the bank, and they are watching this event. And, here is what the Bible says, "Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord." Did you catch that? When we get down to verse 19, after stating the song that they sang, Moses is going to tell us again that after the children of Israel marched across the seabed on dry ground and Pharaoh's army got into the riverbed, God caused the water to come back over Pharaoh's army and He drowned his army in the sea. The Bible is going to say then that Miriam grabbed her tambourine because she was a prophetess (she was Aaron's sister and that means she is Moses' sister too) and she started to dance. Then the other women, seeing her dance before the Lord with her tambourine, grab their tambourines and they start dancing. Then, Miriam sings what Moses and the people started singing in verse 1.

Now, just so you know, the Hebrews called this song the 'Song at the Sea.' It was a song that got incorporated into their prayer book and incorporated into their daily life, so they used this song constantly and continually in

their worship of God. For centuries, the rabbis in the Jewish religion have tried to capture the essence of this song, and they tell us that from the Hebrew language they know there is an antiphonal response between Moses and the men and Miriam and the women. Now, they are not exactly sure if Moses leads the men and the men sing through this song one time, and then Miriam leads the ladies with their tambourines and dancing in response to what they say and they respond back by singing the song again. We are not sure when each verse ends Moses and the men's singing if the women then sing the refrain, or if the men sing one verse, then the women respond by singing another verse, then the men sing again, then the women sing. It is just like when we sing, "When I see the blood." Some of the singers sing, "When I..." and they know to hold that "I" and stretch it out, and then other singers come in right there and sing, "When I..." and when they finish the "I," the first singers start singing, "...see the blood." And then, while they hold on the word "blood," the second singers respond by singing, "...see the blood."

Now, get this picture. The children of Israel have just seen God drown Pharaoh's army in the river and suddenly they realize their redemption is complete, they are free from Egypt! When that dawns on them, they don't turn and head into the wilderness, they don't do life as usual, life gets interrupted, and they break out into worship. Their worship of God included singing.

Could we just pause here for a moment? Because if you don't get anything else, please get this. The big story of this chapter, the big story of this song is the redeemed, singing to their Redeemer, the song of His redemption. Did you catch that? Here is what I want us to understand: worship is a response to the saving activity of God. God has designed the narrative of our life to lead us out of bondage of sin to the land of promise—the full image of His Son, Jesus Christ—and He has so designed the narrative that it not just be historical but that our life be a musical. From time to time, you and I grasp hold of the glory and the power and the essence of what God has done for us in salvation and when we come to that reality, we can't help but worship Him! So worship is not something

that we practice; worship is not something that we choreograph. Worship is not something that we rehearse; worship is a natural response from the redeemed to the Redeemer, and it usually includes singing about His redemption. Amen?

Now, I am not skilled enough to do justice to this, but if we look at this song, it looks like it has four verses: verses 1-5, verses 6-10, 11-16a, and then 16b-18. If I am correct in this, the first verse talks about the triumph of God. The second verse talks about the power of God. The third verse talks about the character of God. Then, the fourth verse talks about the presence of God.

Notice how the song starts. Moses and the people of Israel sing, "I will sing to the Lord." Why? "For He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and the rider he has thrown into the sea." Now, get this picture. Standing on this side of the bank, if my numbers are correct, are two to two and a half million people. Their response to what God did at the Red Sea was not to break out in song singing, we will sing to the Lord, but each individual in that group said this, "I will sing to the Lord." *I* will sing to the Lord. How is it that we gather on the first day of the week to celebrate the redemption that we have in Christ and many of us choose to not sing to the Lord? Some of you did not sing earlier, right? You made a conscious choice to not sing. Boy, are you in trouble this morning because this song says, "I will sing..." Who are the people saying 'I will sing?' It is the redeemed. It is the ones that used to be on that side of the river but are now on this side of the river, and they understand they are safely on this side of the river because the one who was pursuing them has now been defeated by God! So what I am trying to say this morning is that the foundation of a church (God's covenant people) in breaking out in song publicly is they are the redeemed. The whole purpose of breaking out in song is not to entertain anyone, but to sing to the Lord, the Redeemer.

Now notice, this passage, this song, is sung to the Lord but it is also sung about the Lord. I don't know if there has ever been a song written that is any more God-centered than this song. Amen? God is in verse 1. God is in

verse 2. God is in verse 3. God is in verse 4. God is all through this passage. Therefore, I believe the theme of worship, the theme of singing, the theme of this musical, the theme of this heart response of Israel to God is the redeemed singing to their Redeemer about His redemption...I WILL SING TO THE LORD!

I reread some of the psalms this week. Have you ever noticed how the psalms are full of statements that say come before His presence with singing...enter His gates with singing? Now, I know you're not going to like this, but the psalm says, "Sing a new song to the Lord." That means sing a song that you have not sung previously to the Lord. It tells us to sing about His character, it tells us to sing about His salvation, it tells us to sing about His righteousness, and it tells us to sing about His judgement. It says bring the stringed instruments, it says bring the trumpet, it says bring the lyre, and it says bring the harp. The psalmist envisions all of nature joining in with them as they sing to the Lord. But in the midst of that book of psalms, there is a psalm where Israel is not singing. It is Psalm 137. They are in Babylon and they have hung their harps by the willows, by the waters of Babylon. You get that picture, right? All of the harps that Israel had are hanging on the tree branches of the willows down by the river. The people in Babylon are saying to the children of Israel...*Hey, would you sing one of those songs of Zion for us?* Israel says...*We can't sing.* Do you know why they can't sing? It is because they are in captivity. They are in bondage because of their sin. Do you know what they are longing for? They are longing to be free again.

Did you catch that? Please hear me say this. Respectfully, for God's people, not singing is a sign of bondage. It is a sign that you don't have anything to sing about. It is a sign that you are not where you are supposed to be. Whoa! Singing is a sign that our focus is on Him and His redemption. Does that make sense? See, the redeemed who are getting ready to sing, here is what they say: He is my strength, He is my song, He is my salvation, He is my God, and He is my father's God. Wow! HE IS MY STRENGTH. HE IS MY SONG. HE IS MY SALVATION. HE IS MY GOD. HE IS MY FATHER'S GOD. That is why we are singing! That is why we are worshipping. He is our life

and we are not where we used to be, we are now free. That is what my life response to God in worship signifies I am not where I used to be! I am not just singing about God He is my song, and He has triumphed for us over Satan in our salvation. He has triumphed over our sin in salvation. Amen?

Then, the children of Israel talk about the power of God. This is not about Moses raising a stick; this is about God's right hand, God's right arm. It is about God blasting His nostrils. Have any of you ever blasted your nostrils? Do you know what happened when God did that at the Red Sea? The Red Sea parted! Talk about a holy sneeze! Amen?! Talk about a holy snort! He snorted and the Red Sea parted, the children of Israel went out across on dry land, and then He just called for a wind. When He called the wind, the wind caused the waters to go back and all of Pharaoh's army was drowned.

Then you come to the third verse of the song, verse 11. I don't know about you, but I was raised in a little Baptist Church. Now, I don't know why they did this (I guess because of time) but a lot of times, the song leader would sing the first, second, and last verse of a hymn. I don't know which college started teaching musicians to not sing the third verse, but when I examine songs, if I can just be honest, the third verse is usually the best one, amen, and we have churches skipping it! Listen to this third verse, "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?" It continues and says...*majestic in holiness...glorious in deed...working wonders...You lead us by your steadfast love. You guide us on our path. Our enemies are afraid of you as we pass by.*

Then, that last verse, just like most of the old hymns, is always about the return of Jesus. Amen? We finally get to where we are going because of Jesus. In this song, again the Lord did not just bring us out, did not just bring us through, but He brings us in. He does not just bring us in, but He *plants us on the mountain in the abode of His sanctuary and the King reigns forever and ever and ever!* Wow. That is why we sing.

At Hardin, there is a battle that goes on in corporate worship. Many of us gather and say, "I just can't sing!" and then we don't sing, we just sit. I

don't know exactly what is going through your mind, but let me tell you what is going through my mind and my heart. When I make the decision (and it is a decision) to not sing, the focus of my life at that moment is on me and my voice instead of Him and His victory for me in Christ Jesus. Sometimes when I choose not to sing, I say things like... *Well, I am just not familiar with the words of that song*...instead of reminding myself that while I may not be familiar with the word of the song, I am familiar with the Lord of the song. Sometimes when I sit in the public assembly and I say I can't sing, the reason I can't sing is because the focus of my life, the focus of my mind, is on the melody of the music instead of the melody of my heart. Sometimes I choose not to sing and say I can't sing because my focus is on the style of the song rather than the substance of the song. Sometimes I come into the public worship of God and I say I just can't sing because I am so focused on the circumstances of my life rather than the content of the song. What is really happening when I choose not to enter into the worship of God is I am saying I have forgotten which side of this river I am on so I say I can't sing. Instead of saying I will sing, I say I will not sing.

Israel had a song and they sung that song. I want to submit to you this morning as your pastor that we have a song too. I have a song! You have a song! Perhaps the song that captures our salvation best for us on this side of the sea goes something like this:

**Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind, but now I see**

**'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed**

The Lord has promised good to me

**His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures**

**When we have been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun**

**Praise God, Praise God, Praise God
Praise God, Praise God, Praise God
Praise God, Praise God, Praise God
Praise God, Praise God, Praise God**

Never again! Never again will I stand on this side of the sea of salvation and say to myself, I can't sing. For the rest of my life, standing on this side, remembering when I was on the other side, I will now say I will sing!

In Revelation chapter 15 before the seven bowls of wrath are poured out, it paints a picture of a sea mingled with fire and there being a group of people who stand and who have not received the mark of the beast and they sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. I want to be numbered with the redeemed who sing to their Redeemer the song of His redemption.