

SEEDS OF HOPE

SERIES: EXODUS - JOURNEY TO FREEDOM



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Exodus 2:1-25
Second Message
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Jason Street was one of the best high school quarterbacks that the state of Texas had ever seen. His senior year, he was expected to lead the Dillon Panthers to the high school state championship, which I hear is only slightly more important than the Super Bowl if you are from Texas. However, during the first game of the season, Street sustained a career-ending injury. The backup quarterback at the time was a sophomore kid named Matt Saracen. Saracen was no one special; he would have been the first to tell you that. He hadn't even played a single play in a real high school game yet. But now, the game hung on his shoulders and the hope for the whole season with it.

The Panthers were down by 10 points with 2 minutes left when Saracen was first put in the game. The first few plays were terrible—a sack, a missed play call, a terrible pass. It was rough. But then, the crowd started to sense that things might be changing. A tiny bit of hope began to emerge. A few yards gained here. A short pass was completed there. Next thing you know, the Panthers score a touchdown and are only 3 points behind. With 21 seconds left in the game, the Panthers get the ball back. Again, Saracen, the backup quarterback with next to no real-world experience, is under intense pressure. The game is on his shoulders. He has one more play to make something happen and throws an incredible game-winning touchdown pass! But that was only the first game of the season. It was still going to be a long road to the Texas state championship.

That is how the first episode of the TV series Friday Night Lights begins. Friday Night Lights is a show that plays with our sense of hope. At the beginning of that football game, hope is high. The possibility of being the best high school football team in the state of Texas feels attainable. Then something tragic happens. The star quarterback—the one who was supposed to lead the team to victory—is injured. It feels like hope is lost. But then we meet Matt Saracen. He doesn't seem like much, but from the moment we meet him, we begin to wonder, Is this the sign of something good to come? And a tiny seed of hope is planted.

Last week, we started our series in Exodus by looking at Exodus 1. The book of Exodus picks up at a high point. The people of Israel, the Hebrew people, have survived a worldwide famine by moving to Egypt, where they are under the care of their brother Joseph, one of the most powerful men in the land. Everything is looking good. Then something tragic happens. Joseph and all his generation die, along with the Pharaoh of Joseph's day. A new Pharaoh rises to power, and this Pharaoh fears the Israelites and makes it his mission to destroy them. He enslaves them, but they continue to multiply. He orders the Hebrew midwives to kill all the newborn baby boys, but they continue to multiply. Then he recruits the help of the Egyptian masses to drown all of the Hebrew boys in the Nile, a thought that is horrific and horrendous to the core. That is where we left off last week. Fear. Uncertainty. Terror.

Today, however, as we look at chapter 2, we will see the seeds of hope return. A few things will happen that cause us to wonder if things are about to get better. Those seeds will not blossom or flourish—not yet, at least. But the seeds of hope are going to be planted. They are going to be watered. And they are going to take root.

As we look at the hope that began to emerge for the people of Israel when things for them were looking hopeless, I wonder how many of us here are in need of our sense of hope this morning. I wonder how many of us might be in a situation where we cannot seem to find the way out and don't know where the solution might be. This might be an all-encompassing situation, like the Israelites found themselves in, where lives and freedom are at stake. Or it might be in one sphere of life—in a relationship, in a job, in the face of illness, or in your family. Is anyone searching for hope here today?

Lord, God, you know who among us is feeling hopeless. You know who is feeling scared or alone or forgotten or mistreated. You know where the needs are. Jesus, be with us. I pray that you will plant seeds of hope this morning as we look at your Word and commune with your Spirit. Amen.

A Deliverer is Born

Our text for this morning is Exodus 2. As we look at this chapter, we will see three specific instances where hope begins to emerge. In each of these three instances, we will learn something about how we can also experience hope in our places of need.

Exodus 2:1-2:

Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months.

Here, we meet two Levites, a husband and a wife. At the time, the Levites hadn't been designated as the tribe of priests and religious leaders. That will come when the law is given later in Exodus. Even so, the author wants to signal to us that this couple, and their child, will be used by God in a special way. The child is born, and his parents hide him from the Egyptians for the first three months of his life so that he would not be drowned in the Nile, as Pharaoh had commanded. But you can only keep a baby hidden for so long. This couple must come up with another solution.

Exodus 2:3-4:

When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. 4 And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him.

To keep the child safe, his mother took a basket, waterproofed it with a tar-like substance called bitumen, and hid it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. The text does not suggest that she left the baby there continually, which would not have been much better for the baby. Rather, it is likely that she hid him in the basket and hid the basket in the reeds to keep him quiet and out of sight when there were Egyptians around.

However, this plan proves not to be fool-proof. Let's look at what happens next.

Exodus 2:5-10:

Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women

walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. 6 When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." 7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" 8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother. 9 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. 10 When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

As we read this story, seeds of hope are already beginning to emerge. Pharaoh has ordered the Egyptian masses to be on the lookout for any newborn boys to drown them, but this boy escapes. Then the newborn is discovered by an Egyptian—the very daughter of the man who ordered his death—and she takes pity on him. In no small miracle, he is given back to his birth mother to be raised for what was probably the first 3-4 years of his life—long enough to establish a strong bond with his birth family and the beginnings of his identity as one of the Hebrew people. Then he is adopted by the princess and becomes the grandson of the most powerful man in the world. We can't help but think, Is this the beginning? The beginning of something new? Might this boy have something to do with the solution to the desperate situation in which God's people find themselves?

All of this sits on the surface of the text. But there is another seed of hope that is easy to miss in our English translations. When the author tells us that baby Moses was placed in a "basket," this is the Hebrew word *tebah*, and it only appears in one other place in the Bible: in the story of Noah. *Tebah* is the same word that is translated as "ark." The tar-like substance used to waterproof Moses' ark was bitumen, the same substance Noah used to waterproof his ark. Moses' ark was then used to keep him safe from drowning, just as Noah's ark did for him. The allusion is unmistakable. When we read the miraculous way baby Moses was delivered from death, we are meant to immediately think of Noah—the man whom God delivered, the man whom God spared, the man whom God used to relaunch his plan of redemption for all of humanity.

When we read about the deliverance of baby Moses, we are meant to hear: there is a reason for hope. God is preparing to do a great act of deliverance, and we can place our hope in him.

This morning, let us hope in the God who delivers.

Where do you need God to show up with an act of deliverance? What situation in your life do you need God to show up and redeem? No matter how unlikely it seems. No matter how desperate you may feel. No matter what outcome you think is inevitable. Our God delivers. There is no problem too big. There is no addiction too strong. There is no person too far gone. Our God delivers. Today, right now, he wants to give you a seed of hope. Maybe you have given up. Perhaps you have stopped praying and stopped asking God for help. God has not given up on you. The same God who delivered Noah and his family from the flood is here with us today. The same God who delivered baby Moses from a death sentence and made him a prince in the house of Pharaoh is the same God we worship today. Our God delivers.

If you are feeling hopeless today, let this story—let God's Word—be a seed of hope for you today.

A deliverer grows up

After this scene, we are not given much about the childhood of Moses, but we know that Pharaoh's daughter raises him as a part of the royal family. He is a prince in the land of Egypt. As such, he would have enjoyed all of life's best things: power, wealth, privilege, and fame. But God was still at work in Moses' life, preparing him to be the man who would lead the people of Israel to freedom. As the story continues, we get two vignettes of Moses as a young man, and in these two scenes, our sense of hope begins to grow.

Exodus 2:11-12:

One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. 12 He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

The first thing we learn about Moses after being saved as a child is that he killed a man and buried him in the sand. Has Moses gotten off-track? Is he now a murderer? Not exactly. There is more going on.

First, notice how, even after being raised in the royal family of Egypt, Moses still maintains a sense of brotherhood with his own Hebrew people. Twice, they are called "his people." He has not distanced himself from them. Rather, he has gone out to see them in their slave camps. What he sees fills him with holy anger. He watches as an Egyptian slave driver nearly beats a Hebrew man to death, and he steps in to defend the man, killing the Egyptian before the Egyptian could kill the Hebrew.

This act is an act of justice rather than murder. It is not meant to be normative. Scripture makes it clear that vengeance belongs to the Lord and that it is not ours to repay. But Moses is not just any man. He is the man God has called to be the deliverer of his people from their oppressors. Many more Egyptians will soon die as God works to free his people from slavery. Here, we see Moses' first act of deliverance—saving one of his people from death by taking the life of his would-be murderer.

Another seed of hope. Another sign that God is up to something. That deliverance is coming. Not everything is roses from here, though. In fact, this act of Moses ends up sending him running for his life.

Exodus 2:13-15:

When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?" 14 He answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known." 15 When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

What is going on here? Moses tries to act on behalf of his people, but his people are not yet on his side. In fact, they just view him as another oppressive ruler. Pharaoh, however, does not see it the same way. He sees Moses as a threat who has just placed himself squarely on the side of the Hebrews and wants Moses dead. So Moses flees to the wilderness, to the land of Midian. There, we get a second vignette and, with it, more reason for hope.

Exodus 2:16-17:

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water

and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. 17 The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock.

Here, at this well in Midian, we see Moses' second act of deliverance. Seven women trying to draw water are being harassed by a band of shepherds. Moses steps in and saves these women. Again, justice is done. But this time, his act of justice is recognized and appreciated. We see this in what happens next.

Exodus 2:18-22:

When they came home to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come home so soon today?" 19 They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock." 20 He said to his daughters, "Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." 21 And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. 22 She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

When the father of the young women hears what Moses has done, he invites Moses into his home. Moses settles in there and begins to live with this family. Eventually, he marries one of the daughters, and they have a child.

From the time that Moses is a baby until the time that he is 40, we get two pictures of his life. First, he delivers a fellow Hebrew from death at the hands of a murderous Egyptian, and second, he delivers seven young women from the harassment of some shepherds. In both cases, Moses is serving as an instrument of divine justice. The seeds of hope are being watered. Something is changing. What is that? The God of justice is stepping in.

The people of Israel are being reminded, and we are being reminded with them, to place our hope in the God of justice. We can hope in the God of justice.

There is so much in our world that is broken and wrought with injustice. We could think of refugees fleeing Ukraine and Afghanistan. We could think of victims of mass shootings or racial oppression. We could think of victims of domestic violence and abuse in their own homes. Injustice is all around us. In the midst of all

of this injustice, it can be overwhelming. Sometimes we might feel the need just to unplug. To stick our heads in the sand, look the other way, or pretend that the world is not as broken as it is.

But this is not what God has called us to. Instead, God has called us to place our hope in him because he is the God of justice. He is the defender of the innocent and the oppressed. He is the righter of wrongs. And he has given us a promise that as his kingdom comes, so will his justice. No perpetrator will go unpunished. No victim will go unhealed. Every unjust system will be destroyed or redeemed. In the kingdom of God, justice reigns.

Where do you long to see justice become a reality in the world? Where do you long to experience justice in your own life? In the face of these things, God has called us to place our hope in him. In the face of injustice, hope can be so hard to find. But this morning, God wants to give you a seed of hope—a reminder that he is the God of justice. A reminder he has not overlooked you or forgotten about you. God knows you. He loves you. He sees what is broken, and he wants to heal it.

A people cry out for help

Exodus 2 ends with a powerful reminder that God has not forgotten us, and with that, we see our final seed of hope. Let's read the last few verses together.

Exodus 2:23-25:

During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. 24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

For over 400 years, the people of Israel had been slaves in Egypt. Their burdens were unimaginably heavy. Under the weight of those burdens, they groaned. They cried out for help. They felt hopeless. I'm sure many of them had given up on God altogether. But now, by some act of grace, they found themselves looking once again to the God of their fathers for help. They cried out to him.

We see God doing four things in response to their cries. God heard their cries. He remembered his covenant—that is, his promise—to their fathers. He saw the people in their distress. And he knew. God knew.

God knew exactly what his people were experiencing. He knew everything they had been through—every soul-crushing and bone-breaking burden they had forced upon them. God knew.

God knew what he was going to do about it. He knew that he was going to raise up Moses. He knew that Pharaoh was going to harden his heart against him. He knew that he was going to send the plagues. He knew that he was going to part the Red Sea. God knew.

God knew that after the people were freed from slavery, they would again turn their back on him. God knew they would complain about being thirsty and hungry and would want to return to Egypt. He knew that the people would worship the golden calf. He knew that for the next 1500 years, his people would spend most of their time chasing after other gods, defaming his name and reputation among the nations. God knew.

God knew that his people needed a Savior—a savior like Moses but much, much greater. God knew he would send his only Son, Jesus, to earth as a man. He knew that Jesus would live the life of a servant and die the death of a criminal. He knew that Jesus would be tortured and crucified, his body would be broken, and his soul crushed for our sakes.

God knew that Jesus would rise again from the dead. God knew that he would conquer sin and death. He knew that Jesus would make way for our sins to be forgiven and our wounds to be healed so that we, too, might experience life and freedom in him. God knew.

Today, God knows and invites us to put our hope in him. So let us Hope in the God who knows.

Let us hope in the God who knows what it is like to be abused. The God who knows what it is like to be abandoned. The God who knows exactly what you have been through in the past, what you are going through in the present, and what you will go through in the future. The God who knows everything you have done, both the good and the bad. The God who knows all that is in your heart. The God who knows you and loves you and gave his life so that he could be with you forever. That is the God we worship today. Let us put our hope in him.

Conclusion

Earlier this year, I bought some Bitcoin. Not a lot, but some. When I bought it, I said, I hope this keeps going up in value. Let's just say today, I am glad that I didn't buy more Bitcoin. And yet I hope one day I will wish I had bought more.

Hope is risky. When we dare to hope, we open ourselves up to being disappointed, even crushed. Hope that is unfounded is altogether foolish. But hope in God is never foolish. It is never risky. We are never taking a chance when we hope in God. Our hope in God is always secure.

This is because our God is the God of the impossible. Nothing can stand in the way of his purposes. Nothing can separate us from his love. He is a miracle worker. He is a promise keeper. He is a God who is worthy of our hope and our praise.