

“WHAT CHILD IS THIS? AMRAM AND JOCHEBED’S SON MOSES.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

December 6, 2020, 9 and 10:30 AM

Text for the Sermon: Exodus 2:1-10; Hebrews 11:23-28

Prayer: Holy Father, may your true and holy Word be faithfully preached and fruitfully applied for your glory and our good. Enlighten the eyes of our hearts, enable us to see Jesus as He truly is. Be glorified and edify us with spiritual truth, by the power of your Spirit. Amen.

What child is this? A child is born.

What we are noticing in this advent season is at critical moments in God’s salvation plan when God wants to do something really big, really important, He does something really small, a miraculous birth takes place, a child is born who will change the world or prepare the world for something greater.

Exodus 1, background.

Exodus begins with God’s people suffering. They have been suffering for a very long time, almost 400 years. They are slaves in Egypt suffering under the rule of severe taskmasters. They are abused, oppressed.

Exodus 1:11, 13-14 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. ... 13 So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves 14 and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.

Think Jews in Germany under Hitler; Muslims in Myanmar and China, Christians in northern Nigeria.

And then to add insult to injury, it gets worse, Pharaoh decrees to kill the Hebrew sons.

Exodus 2, birth of Moses.

God’s people are suffering horribly and they are crying out to God for mercy and relief and God heard their prayers and cries and what does He do? God caused a baby to be born who would be a savior, a deliverer for His people. But they would have to wait 80 years before the baby would be ready in God’s time to save His people. 80 years.

Oh the slowness of God. His clock and calendar are set for eternity. His snail’s pace frustrates us and our schedules. How many Psalms begin “How long, O Lord?” There are no quick fixes

with God. God is a patient God who tries our patience, who humbles us with His long view and big picture.

God starts with a baby whose life is hanging by a thread and great powers ready to snuff it out. He starts with a baby born into poverty, into an oppressive world. He starts with a plan so weak, in the light of the world's impressive powers that no one would ever dare to hope in this child.

Do you know how many verses there are in the Bible about waiting? Read Friday's devotional.

Psalms 27:14 Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

Psalms 40:1 I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

Isaiah 40:31 They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.

Lamentations 3:25-26 The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.
26 It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

God's people have always been a waiting people. As Christians, this is what we do. God doesn't come to those who don't wait. But our waiting is never passive. Our waiting is active. It is expectant and hope-filled and busy. God is always at work and even now is at work. He is bringing to completion all the good work He has begun.

Is this not a picture of the incarnation?

Galatians 4:4-5 When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Blessed is the person who doesn't interpret the slowness and silence of God as indifference, lack of caring, or that He no longer listens to us. The slowness of God, the patience of God is purposeful and redemptive, leading to salvation.

II Peter 3:8-9 Do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

I mentioned earlier that at critical moments in God's plans a miraculous birth takes place. We saw that last week with Isaac, we will see it with the rest of the babies in our series. So how is Moses' birth miraculous? His mother was not barren like the other mothers, she had already had Miriam and Aaron.

Notice the providence of God, that He waits until after Pharaoh's edict to kill all Hebrew boys, before Moses is born. Moses' birth is against the odds, he should have been killed.

Remember how God waited 25 years until Abraham and Sarah were too old to have children for Isaac to be born. God is the God of hard and impossible things. When everything is at its worst, at rock bottom, when in man's eyes all hope is gone, God is there to bring life out of ashes, to bring about a resurrection. God loves to reveal His glory in the weakest places.

Pharaoh wants to destroy God's plans and God's people by throwing the boy babies into the Nile. God puts Moses into the Nile and then has Pharaoh, through his daughter, save him and bring him into his house. God has a way of thwarting the plans of the wicked, of turning the tables on them. Pharaoh's plan to destroy babies, ends up saving the baby who will destroy him.

God beats him at his own game. God is always in complete control of the situation.

Habakkuk 1:5 Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded.
For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.

Moses and Jesus.

Each of our advent babies points to Jesus. Everything in the OT is an advent theme, an anticipation of one who is coming. Moses is a foreshadowing of Jesus, he points to Jesus.

Both were born Jews, both in very humble, poor circumstances. Moses was born under the tyranny of an oppressive Gentile ruler, placed in a humble basket (ark)
Jesus was born to a very poor couple, placed in a rude manger, born under the tyranny of the Roman Herod, who held the people of Israel in a kind of slavery.

Both births were uncommon, unique, something special is noted about each child. Exodus says Moses was a fine child (NIV-fine child; KJV-goodly child; NASB-he was beautiful). Hebrews says he was beautiful (NIV-no ordinary child; NASB-beautiful; KJV-a proper child).

Now we all know that every parent thinks their baby is the most beautiful, perfect child. But there is something else going on here.

Calvin says "there was some sort of mark of excellence to come, engraved on the boy which gave promise of something out of the ordinary for him."

Something about his appearance moved them to take extraordinary measures, something about him inspired them with a hope that he was destined for great things, he might be the future liberation of their people.

This reminds us of when Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple on the eighth day and old Simeon and Anna saw Jesus and were immediately impressed upon that this child was special and unique, He would be the consolation/redemption of Israel.

Both were endangered after their birth, with a decree of death given for both. Moses and Jesus were both wonderfully preserved by the special providence of God.

Both were adopted, Moses had a mother but no father. Jesus born of a virgin, with no father, adopted by Joseph. Both spent childhood years in Egypt.

Both had long periods of silence from childhood to adulthood, and spent years in seclusion, Moses 40 years in the desert, Jesus 30 years in Nazareth.

Both voluntarily relinquished riches, glory, and a kingly palace. When Moses was 40 years old he turned away from his adoption, from all the pleasures, indulgences and benefits of the royal palace.

Jesus left the glory of heaven, of His Father's house, to humble Himself and suffer and die for us. Both suffered for their people to gain a greater reward.

Moses was miraculously saved from death in order to be the instrument of redemption. This is Moses' resurrection, raised from death in the Nile. Moses' birth set in motion the deliverance of the entire nation of the people of God. He will lead a mass exodus of slaves through the Red Sea and they will become a new creation, a new nation.

Jesus leads us out of captivity to sin and makes a new creation, His Church.

You can't make this up or manipulate this. There are no coincidences here. The parallels are prophetic, God is writing the greatest story ever told in which His glory will be put on display for all the world. Everything about Moses points to one who is like Moses yet greater than Moses.

The center piece of history is Jesus. Moses was the shadow, Jesus is the substance. Jesus doesn't point to someone else yet to come. God has seen our sin and suffering and He sent a child, His Son to be our Savior and Redeemer, our deliverer, to stand up to our oppressor and save us.

John 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me.

Implications and application.

Light in the midst of darkness.

We are in a season of suffering, darkness and waiting. For many, 2020 has been a dark year – physically, emotionally, mentally, financially. People have lost their loved ones, their jobs, their security and their health. Advent and Christmas are seasons of waiting for God's light and hope to break in.

Moses led the people of God out of the darkness of Egypt and points to one greater than Moses who leads us out of the darkness of our world.

The prophet Isaiah prophesied about a child to come:

Isaiah 9:2,6 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.

John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not [and cannot] overcome it.

Faith in the midst of suffering.

How often don't we feel weak and powerless in the face of life's circumstances, in the face of forces or people stronger than us? How often are we weary of waiting?

400 years of suffering is much easier to look back on than to live through. 400 years is a long time, especially to endure, a year is a long time, but God has come and is with us.

He has everything planned out and it will end according to His good plan. And yes, along the way His good plan includes some very dark, difficult, hard, painful things.

Hebrews 6:12 [be] imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Imitate those who have patient, expectant faith. Trust God, rest in the knowledge that His secret providence is at work in all things.

By faith in Jesus we believe in the sure presence and strong arm of our sovereign God.

Isaiah 64:4 From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts [works] for those who wait for him.

Don't despise God's afflictions. Suffering is better than sin.

Hebrews 12:2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

For to us a child is born who has suffered for us and suffers with us.

Sacrifice in the midst of materialism.

By faith Moses choose the path of suffering for the sake of His people.

Hebrews 11:25-26 choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

How many of us would have done what Moses did, give up what Moses gave up?
I think the temptation to stay in the palace would have been very hard to resist.

How difficult is it to conquer worldly temptations to pleasure, ease, comfort? It's impossible apart from the transforming power of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit.

What a sad reversal that Christmas has been turned into commercial and consumeristic excess. What a strange way to celebrate the one who shunned the riches and pleasures of heaven to come dwell among us. Let us consider how we can flee from the fleeting pleasures of sin and resist the temptations of material excess for *the greater treasures of Christ*.

Which is better, to be a daughter of Pharaoh or a son of Abraham? We want both, but we cannot serve two gods, two masters. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?

Let's shift our focus to giving rather than getting, to serving rather than being served, to loving and sharing and enjoying some of the forced simplicity this year holds, and welcome it as God's humbling and refocusing.

How can we imitate Moses and Christ, and sacrifice our own pleasures and comforts for the sake of others and for the glory of God?

This year more than any other may we look for what God would have us do different for His glory.

Habakkuk 1:5 Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded.
For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.