



“The Passover”

Exodus 12:1-31

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Sermon audio and text available at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

A new beginning...

Have you ever felt stuck in life? Have ever had one of those moments where you wish your life could just move on to the next thing? Maybe life is boring. Maybe it's tiring, or difficult. Maybe you're going through a time of grief or illness that you wish was just over. Maybe a lot of us here are in a situation like that today? I'm sick of this cold! I want it to be over! I'm sick of my internet connection being broken! I'm sick of this cold weather!

- I love the movie Groundhog Day. (picture)

Every morning, Phil Connors (Bill Murray) wakes up at 6:00am. And it's the start of Groundhog Day in America. But every night he goes to bed, and he wakes up again on the same day. He stuck in a loop. Again and again and again. His life won't move on from Groundhog day. And he spends each day trying to figure out how to move on.

Imagine that. Waking up every morning and living the same day over again?

- Think of Israel. They've lived in Egypt for 430 years.

Every day they woke up to the same day of slavery. Make bricks... Build things for Pharaoh... Watch your children being drowned in the Nile River... It was a horrible existence and life was hard. They were stuck. And they cry out to God for help.

Then finally, one day, God sends Moses. And Moses says to Pharaoh: "God has sent me to say to you: 'Let my people go.' " And Pharaoh says "No", and God sends the plagues.

Nine plagues... of Biblical proportions! The plague of blood, plagues of frogs, gnats, flies, the plague on livestock, a plague of boils, a plague of hail, a plague of locusts and a plague of darkness. And **still** Pharaoh refuses to let them go. And then comes the tenth plague. The worst plague. The plague to end all plagues. God brings a plague of death on the first born of everything in Egypt, people **and** livestock.

And you have to ask "Why?" Why would God do this? What is God's purpose in bringing this plague?

Because God is a God of new beginnings. God is bringing an end to their slavery and a new beginning for Israel. God is not going to leave them stuck in their slavery in Egypt. Listen to what God says to them in chapter 12:1-2 –

- *“The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.”*

This is a new beginning. God says to Israel: This part of your life is over. You are no longer going to be slaves. You’re moving on. You see, God has the power to do that. God has the power to move us on in life. God has the power to give us a new beginning and to put an end to the things in life that keep us “stuck”.

Then God gives them a **new sacrifice**, verses 3-7:

- *“...each man is to take a lamb for his family... the animal you choose must be year old males without defect...Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses”*

This sacrificial lamb that will mark the end to their slavery and the beginning to their new life. They are to sacrifice this lamb and then mark their houses with its blood. Why? **To distinguish them from the Egyptians.** This is what it’s all about. God is making his people **distinct**. God is bringing them out of slavery in Egypt and moving them on to a new beginning FOR A PURPOSE! And that purpose is that they will be his people, a **distinct** people. They will be marked as **different** from everyone else.

- **III** – The other day I crossed the lights down here on the corner with 2 of my children on the way to school.

There were 3 or 4 other children crossing as well. The lights to walk turned green. And all the kids started to cross. Then a car came through the red light, through the pedestrian crossing. So I called out to **all** the kids to stop. But I grabbed onto **my** kids. I called out to **all** the kids and thankfully they stopped in time. But I grabbed onto **MY** kids because they are distinct. Because they are mine. They belong to me.

And that’s what God is doing here. He’s calling out to everyone – to the Israelites, to the Egyptians. He’s saying “I am God and if you don’t listen to me there are going to be consequences. But he grabs the Israelites as his children and protects them. And when Egypt ignores God’s call, this is what happens – verse 12:

- *“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every first born – both men and animal – **and I will bring judgement on all the gods of Egypt.** I am the Lord.*

The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

God has called out to all of Egypt and all of Israel. And when Egypt refuses to listen, God brings judgement on their “gods”. God shows them that they have no real gods to protect them. And he shows them that Israel does. That Israel’s God is the one true God.

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The Exodus from Egypt is about freedom. God setting his people free. But then what? If you’re set free from slavery, then what? If you finish your studies at Uni or TAFE, then what? Don’t you DO something with that qualification? If you get married, then what – doesn’t that imply an ongoing relationship? If you are set free from slavery, then what? Don’t you DO something with that freedom?

For God’s people, the Exodus was just the beginning. After their freedom, Israel will continue to celebrate the Passover – for example, in verse 14:

- *“This is a day you are to commemorate; for generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord – a lasting ordinance.”*

This is going to be an ongoing celebration and reminder in their life. They’re not just being set free. They’re being set free to be God’s people. They’re being set free from slavery to enter the Promised Land. They’re being set free to worship God and serve him. They’re being set free from slavery in Egypt to serve God in the Promised Land.

***God doesn’t just move us on in life. He moves us on with a purpose. And that purpose is to **serve him**. To **worship him**. To be his **holy people**.

Come with me in the Bible to the New Testament. Jesus also celebrated the Passover to remember what God did for his people. But before he dies, he celebrates it with his disciples in an unusual way...

- Luke 22:19-20 – *“And he took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me. In the same way after supper he took the cup saying: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”*

What Jesus does is to make this Passover meal about HIM! The Passover is now about Jesus. This is a **new** covenant. Jesus is calling himself the sacrificial lamb, the lamb without defect. Jesus is the one whose blood would be shed to set us free and save us from

judgement. Just as the Passover saved the Israelites from the slavery and death in Egypt, Jesus himself will now be the Lamb of God who saves us from our slavery to sin and death.

The Passover was only the beginning. The Passover remembered God saving his people from Egypt. But it pointed forward to the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who came to save all people from their slavery to sin and death.

Let's turn to one more passage, an important one, in 1 Peter 1:17-19:

- *"Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."*

Live as strangers here in this world, because God has redeemed you **from** this empty way of life the world offers. God has redeemed you **with** the precious blood of Christ. God has redeemed you **out of** slavery to the ways of this world, from the thinking of this world, from the desires of this world, from the sin and death of this world. He has redeemed us **to** freedom.

- **Stuck in a moment.** When we feel stuck in life, when we just want to move on, let me say just two things to finish today:
 1. Without God, there is no moving on. As soon as we escape one of those "stuck" moments, we just move into another one. Without God, there is no true freedom from this world's empty way of life.
 2. But for the person who puts their hope in Jesus, we are no longer stuck.

We're strangers in this world. And there are certainly times that we FEEL stuck. We get sick and we'll feel stuck. We have a bad time at work and feel stuck. A relationship is difficult and we feel stuck and we just want to move on. We may feel stuck in sin. We may feel stuck financially or emotionally or physically or spiritually.

But this is what God says: we are strangers in this world. These worldly things don't **own** us. If our body completely falls apart, if our finances completely crumble away, if our relationships are deeply corrupted, we are God's children, bought with the precious blood of Jesus. We will face these difficulties. But we are not defined by them. We are defined by our relationship with God. And that means that each day we are called to worship and serve him. And that's ALL that matters.