

February 5, 2023
The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Pastor Matt Duerr

The Road Less Traveled-Passover Parkway

It's the epiphany season and we're making Christ manifest; and we're doing so using the road less travel which is actually a little bit of a tour through the Old Testament and seeing how the Old Testament makes Christ manifest. We began with creation where Satan was told that the Messiah would come through the seed of a woman and crush his head.

We continued with the harsh truth highway, looking at the flood and how God does not accept sin. Yet, God was a God of Covenant and He gave us the Covenant with the rainbow and the promise that He would never flood the entire earth again. Then we took a little trip down Covenant Court because God is a God of Covenant and Lineage Lane. Looking at that lineage from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The covenant with Abraham is a two way process saying to Abraham these three, the family, the home, the kindred, leave them for me and I will bless you. And we saw that sevenfold blessing ending with; that in you all nations will be blessed.

This morning we take a little bit of a trip down Deliverance Drive but we have to first begin with a bit of a review. What happened after Abraham, Isaac, Jacob? Well Jacob, as you know, had twelve son's number eleven was Joseph. And Joseph was his favorite because Joseph was a son of his dear wife Rachel. However Joseph was a dreamer and he upset his ten older brothers and so they sold him into slavery. Slavery that took him to Egypt where he was in the house of Potiphar, serving Potiphar faithfully. Potiphar's wife had eyes for Joseph, claimed that he tried to rape her when he actually shunned her. He was put in prison where he faithfully served the prison keeper. And as time went by he was put in charge of all the prisoners. Then one day two new prisoners came in, the baker and the steward of Pharaoh himself. Evidently the pastry wasn't too good, and the wine wasn't quite of a vintage era. Regardless, they had some dreams Joseph told them what they meant.

To the baker, in three days you're going to die. And to the steward, in three days you'll be restored. But when you're restored, please remember me. Well, it happened just as Joseph had said, because it's the Holy Spirit who gave him that power to interpret those dreams. And the steward was restored to Pharaoh and serving him, and he forgot about Joseph. But then Pharaoh had some dreams; terrible dreams. And he wanted to know their meaning and none of his wise men, his enchanters, could tell him the meaning of this dream. And it's then that the steward remembered and said, 'you know there's a guy in prison, his name is Joseph, he told my dream, and he got it absolutely right. So, Pharaoh had Joseph brought in from prison and Joseph told the meanings of those dreams. Dreams of cows eating cows and corn eating corn. That there would be seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of drought. So, Joseph found favor with Pharaoh and was put in charge of the agriculture of Egypt storing up for seven years to prepare for the seven years that would be lean. It was during those drought years, which we in California understand, that Jacob, Joseph's older brothers and younger brother as well. So, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt and well you know how it turned out. There was a whole series of give and takes and all of that but eventually Joseph revealed that he was their brother, that he was doing fine, that he held no grudges, and he said; 'bring dad here. I'll take care of you.' When Jacob was brought in and all the family; Pharaoh was pleased to meet them and gave them land of Goshen in the Nile Delta; a lush agricultural land.

That's where we pick up in the book of Exodus. Exodus 1, verse 8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And he said concerning the children of Israel, 'the people are too strong and too many. Pharaoh's idea was, let's just make their burden heavier and let's really oppress them and they're going to be so tired, and they won't have any more children. But all he did was make them stronger and multiply more. So, he made a decree that all newborn Hebrew males were to be killed at birth by the midwives. The midwives wouldn't do it. They saw that as taking the life of a child and that would not be pleasing to the gods. Then Pharaoh employed racism and told all of Egypt, if you see a Hebrew male baby, kill it. And you know what racism works and

the children were being killed. And Moses' mother, she had a baby, and she hid him. But when he got to an age that she couldn't hide them anymore she put him in a basket and set him adrift on the Nile with the hopes that someone would save him. And sure enough, Pharaoh's daughter did. She saw this basket, she opened it, there was a baby, she felt sympathy for the baby, but she didn't know how to care for a baby. And Moses' older sister Miriam, who was following along the reeds in the Nile to see what would happen, said, I know a mother who could nurse that baby and raise him for you and so Moses was taken back to his mother. Pharaoh continued to oppress the Israelites even further, making them make bricks without straw and all sorts of terrible things. And as Moses grew, he saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating fellow Hebrew and he killed that Egyptian. When Moses found out that that knowledge had gone public, he ran away to the land of Midian. He met Jethro, the priest of Midian and his daughter Zipporah, who became Moses's wife. And it was there, in the wilderness that Moses came upon that burning bush that burning but not consumed. A bush that spoke to him because it was God. Who said, 'Moses take off your sandals for the land on which you now stand is holy ground. He said, 'go down to tell Pharaoh, Let my people go.' Moses's response was, 'Lord I can't go, I can't tell him. There's so many gods and I don't know your name. So, when he asks me "which God is talking to you?" I won't be able to tell him.' And that's when God said, "I AM." In Hebrew, it's YHWH. Tell him "I AM has sent you. It's a very simple name and it's a very simple meaning. I AM GOD. I AM the living God. I AM alive. I am not made of stone. Now let My people go!

This is the road base for Deliverance Drive. And God acted on behalf of his people. It was a divine faceoff. Each one of the 10 plagues that God sent on Egypt, was an attack on an Egyptian god. The first plague, the Nile turning to blood, was against Hapi, the god of the Nile. That was followed with frogs covering the land. That was against Hehket, the goddess of fertility whose image was that of a woman with a frogs head. Then we have the dust that turned to gnats all across Egypt. This was an attack on the Egyptian Geb. Geb, the god of the dust of the earth. Then there were the flies which is an attack on Khepri, the god of creation

and his head was that of a fly. Then we had the attack on the death of the livestock which was against Offick, the bull god but also against Hather goddess of love and protection whose head was that of a cow. Then with the boils that infected the people of Egypt, this was against Isis the goddess of medicine and health. We follow that with the hail and fire, the lightning and thunder with this tremendous hailstorm that wiped out almost everything this was against the Egyptian goddess Newt, the god of the sky and Seth, the god of the storm. Then we have the locust, the plague of locusts against Sirius, the God of the crops, and Serapia, the protector of the crops. These are all lesser gods. The three days of darkness, that was now against one of the major gods, Ra, the god of the sun, who rode his chariot across the sky every day. And the tenth plague, death of the firstborn was against Pharoah himself because he is considered god of the earth, the man god the greatest of all.

And with that final showdown, God versus Pharoah, now we're introduced to the Passover. And in keeping with the sermon theme, shall we say Passover Parkway. Only the first born of Egypt died. The angel of death passed over the Hebrews. How? Why? Well, they listened to Moses and in faith they did what Moses said. The trusted God's word that came through Moses and they acted on it. This Passover is the beginning of time, of the calendar for the Hebrew people. This was to be, God's said, the first month. And on the tenth day, 'again yes, those of you have been through Revelation Bible Study, you go ten, oh that's the number of completion. Yes, on the tenth day, the complete time, they were to take a lamb, one for each household. That lamb was to be an unblemished lamb, a male one year old.

And they were to take that lamb, that unblemished lamb, into their house to be with them for four days. Yes, four the number of earth. They were in captivity, they were then to kill that lamb, take the blood, put it on the door post, and the lintel over the door. They were then to eat the Passover meal. Eat it in haste because God was going to act and deliver them. God was very specific here. He says this is the Lord's Yahweh's Passover. It is a statute forever. This day shall be for you, a Memorial Day and I will pass over you and no plague will befall you. You know, it

doesn't take a rocket scientist to see what God was doing as he was delivering them. He was setting the stage for our deliverance. An unblemished lamb, Christ the unblemished Lamb of God. Come into the house and live with you for four days. Four the number of the earth. Christ would come and sojourn with us on this earth He would shed His blood, not to be put on the door post or over the door, but to be put over us, so that God's eternal judgment might pass over us.

And then we move to the New Testament, to our gospel reading this morning and what do we see? It is at this exact time, that Jesus sits down to the Passover feast with His disciples on the night of his betrayal. It's a new Passover. A new Passover in His body and blood; the statute that is to be forever. It is forever, it is continuing. When we celebrate the Lord's supper, it is a Memorial Day, as God said, of remembrance. Remembering how God delivered in the Old Testament, and it was all a prefigure of Christ, who would deliver all for all time as we see in the gospels. But even more, it is that He comes to us. When he says this is my body, he was taking a very specific piece of bread, a piece of unleavened bread. In the Passover meal there were three pieces of unleavened bread; three put together in a single bag that had three compartments. Yes, three in one, the middle one, the one that we would think of as representing Jesus; is called the afikomen. It means that which comes later because Christ would come later. That is the one that Jesus took, broke, and he gave to his disciples, saying, take eat, this is my body broken for you. He's saying, I am the Passover meal. And now it's not just unleavened bread, it's me, I'm coming to you.

And the cup that he took, we read that it was after supper, after giving thanks; that was the third cup of the Passover, the cup of redemption. That's the one that he took and said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. He's keeping that format with remember, this is a statue forever. Our God is of God of deliverance and he prefigured that deliverance for us in that Egyptian account so that we would see He will take on Satan, and He will conquer Satan and sin and death and be victorious on our behalf.

And He comes to us in Holy Communion, and He brings with Him that redemption, that forgiveness, that salvation. This is why Paul says, whoever eats or drinks without recognizing the body of Christ eats and drinks condemnation on himself, it's serious. This is Jesus, this is God, this is the Lamb who sojourned with us; is coming to sojourn with us today.

And that's why I call it Passover Parkway. A Parkway is a lane or drive that is beautifully landscaped. Because the Lord's Supper is a beautiful, direct pathway to salvation through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who comes to us each and every time we celebrate it. Who has opened the pathway of prayer for us to talk to God at anytime, anywhere. The Savior, who died, whose blood covers our sins and makes us one with Him. That is the beauty Passover Parkway. Next week we take a little trip down Atonement Avenue.

In our Savior's Name. Amen.