

Setting the Stage: The Faithful Providence of God

Exodus 2

Good morning, church. And for those of you watching online, welcome. We are glad you are joining us. My name is Steve Haupt and I am one of the pastors here at Peine Ridge Church in Wentzville, Mo.

I want to begin this morning by asking some questions that some of you may be asking or have asked in the past.

- Why did you lose that job?
- Why didn't you get that promotion?
- Why is your marriage on the rocks?
- Why did your children rebel?
- Why did that thing you had such a great desire for not come to pass?
- Why is that church you planted or helped to plant no longer in existence?

These are difficult questions. Very real questions. And sometimes it's hard to see the hand of God at work in these situations. Sometimes God feels very far away, or disinterested. If you **are** dealing with any of those questions or situations today, my prayer is that you will find hope in Exodus 2 as we look at the providence of God in the life of Moses. Pastor Jason's introductory sermon for the book of Exodus that he preached last Sunday was excellent. I hope you had a chance to hear it. If not, go back and listen. I want to reiterate and build upon something he said last week--that chapters 1 and 2 set the stage for the rest of the book. But not only do these first two chapters set the stage for the rest of Exodus, but in chapter 2, we see God using the first 80 years of Moses' life to set the stage for the final and greatest chapter of his story. God will providentially orchestrate the events of those 80 years to prepare Moses for 40 years of leading Israel. None of the things that happened to Moses were wasted. God had a purpose in every event of his life. The same is true for followers of Christ. Nothing that happens in your life is ever wasted. God has a purpose in

every event of your life as well. Here in Exodus, God's people, the people of Israel needed a rescuer to save them out of slavery. And God raised up Moses to be that man. And he used the events recounted in chapter 2 to prepare Moses for the purpose to which he was called.

I've entitled this sermon "Setting the Stage: The Faithful and Powerful Providence of God". In Exodus 2, we'll see God's providence at work in the preservation of Moses. And we'll see God's providence in the preparation of Moses. And finally, we'll see God's providence in His loving decision to rescue His people.

God's providential preservation of Moses.

Throughout the book of Exodus, we are going to see parallels between the life of Moses and the life of Jesus. We'll see ways in which Moses' life prefigures, or points forward to Jesus. In Hebrews 3:2, the author compares the faithfulness of these two men.

3 Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ² who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house.

God raised up Moses to rescue His people out of slavery. And Moses faithfully fulfilled that calling. Similarly, God has sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue His people from the chains of sin and death. But I want you to keep in mind that the lesser is always pointing to the greater. Jesus Christ is the greater Moses. Always keep this nugget of knowledge tucked away in the back of your mind when you see these parallels.

We see the first parallel right off the bat. Both Jesus and Moses were born under the edict of an evil tyrant attempting to wipe out baby boys. The last verse of Exodus 1 says:

22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.”

Just as Moses was born under this edict from Pharaoh, many centuries later, Herod will attempt to wipe out Jesus by exterminating the baby boys of Bethlehem. So we have this edict of Pharaoh echoing when we read in the first few verses of chapter 2 that a Hebrew man and his wife had a baby boy and hid him for three months. Hiding Moses in the face of this edict is an act of faith as they trusted in God’s protection from Pharaoh.

Hebrews 11:23 tells us:

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

But apparently, after three months, hiding Moses was no longer an option. So, Jochebed takes a basket and makes a little boat for him. It’s interesting that the Hebrew word that is twice translated “basket” here in Exodus 2 is the same word that is translated 28 times as “ark” in the Genesis account of the flood. Thus, just as Noah was saved by the ark in the waters of judgment in Genesis, Moses is saved by his ark in the waters of death here in Exodus 2.

Now the providence of God is visible behind the scenes, starting in verse 3. Jochebed places the basket among the reeds by the bank of the river and assigns her daughter to be on the lookout to see what happens. And not coincidentally, but providentially, here comes Pharaoh’s daughter down to the river to bathe. The princess spies the basket over in the reeds and

sends a servant to fetch it. When she opens the basket, Moses is crying and the princess's heart is providentially filled with pity for him. Now, Moses' sister, Miriam, comes onto the scene and offers to find a Hebrew woman to nurse Moses. The princess dispatches Miriam to find a Hebrew nurse and she comes back with Jochebed, Moses' mother. And just look in verse 9 at the grace and humor of God. Not only will Jochebed get to raise Moses until he is weaned and perhaps beyond, but she'll get paid for doing it!

When God's providence is at work, He doesn't have to perform miraculously. He often uses people to get things done. God providentially used the faith of Moses' parents to resist the edict of Pharaoh. He providentially used Jochebed's ingenuity to build an ark to preserve Moses in the river. He providentially caused Pharaoh's daughter to come to the river to bathe at just the right time and notice a basket sitting among the reeds. And he providentially used the faith, courage and audacity of Moses' sister to approach the princess and put forth her proposition. We can see the hand of God working at every turn to preserve the life of the prophet who would lead His people to freedom.

God's providential preparation of Moses.

We see the preparation of Moses to be the leader of the Israelites begin in the last part of verse 9. Moses' mother took him home and nursed him. And when he grew older, she took him to live with Pharaoh's daughter. So Moses got to spend years under the training and care of his own parents. We're not told how old he was when he went to live in the palace, but the best guess is he was 10 or 12. He was definitely old enough to have been steeped in the traditions and the religious beliefs of his people. And then he spends his teenage and young adult years being trained and educated as an Egyptian prince. He no doubt learned to lead and organize an army, to run a government, and many other things that helped shape him as a leader. We ought to stand in awe of the providence of God that equipped

Moses with all of the essential skills and knowledge that he would later need.

But education wasn't the only preparation Moses needed. We see in verse 11, that Moses goes out to his people and looks on their burdens. I'm going to let Stephen pick up the story in his sermon in Act 7, beginning in verse 23.

23 "When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. 25 He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand. 26 And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?' 27 But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' 29 At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

Moses felt the call to rescue his people from the Egyptians, but he took matters into his own hands. He comes upon an Egyptian who is oppressing a Hebrew he breaks God's law by committing murder. Apparently, Moses needed more preparation. Apparently, he needed to experience failure. To teach him humility. To teach him to depend on God and not on himself. To teach him that trying to accomplish God's purposes in ways that are contrary to God's revealed will is not pleasing to God. Moses felt the call to lead his people out of slavery and he assumed that, at age 40, the time was ripe. He supposed that his Hebrew brethren would understand that he was there to help them. But in the providence of God, they rejected him, just as their descendants would reject Jesus many centuries later. Moses had presumed that it was time to take a stand for his people and he had

fallen flat on his face. Not only that, but we see in Exodus 2:15 that Pharaoh has uncovered the murder and is seeking to kill him. Moses has been rejected by his own people. His adoptive people are seeking his life. There is nothing left for him to do but to turn tail and run. And so he took off and by God's providence, he ended up in Midian.

I want you to imagine Moses as he is running for his life. Can you see him in your mind's eye? Deflated. Defeated. Humiliated. Nowhere to turn. Rejected by the Hebrews and hated by the Egyptians. Have you ever been in that kind of situation? You just knew God was leading you to do something and you fell flat on your face? That's a hard place to be. It causes you to ask lots of questions. I'm sure Moses had a lot of questions. He didn't know how the rest of his life would turn out. But we have the benefit of hindsight. We know the end of the story. We know that God was setting the stage for something bigger and better than Moses could have ever imagined. He was setting the stage for Moses to rescue His people in a God-glorifying way, not in a manner that glorifies man. So, if you find yourself in a tough situation, I encourage you to remember Moses. God is setting the stage for something bigger and better. You have been beaten and battered and eventually humbled enough to do what God has called you to do. Maybe you'll lead a nation. Or a church. Maybe you'll go overseas and proclaim the gospel. Or maybe it's something less grand in man's eyes but equally important in God's eyes. Maybe you'll be an influence on a child, a grandchild, a teenage neighbor, or some other person and then God uses THAT person to continue the wonderful work for His Kingdom that He began in you. God is never sleeping, or inactive. He is always at work for the fame of His glory and for the good of His people. So trust Him. Believe Him. Rest in His promises. Just as Moses' story was not finished as he fled from Pharaoh, neither is your story finished.

God providentially leads Moses to Midian where, we see in verse 16, he encounters a family of sisters being harassed by shepherds as they attempt to draw water from a well. True to his identity as an upright man of

courage and strength, Moses rises up and saves them. The girls take him home to meet daddy and Reuel (who is later referred to as Jethro) was so impressed with Moses that he gave one of his daughters to him to be his wife.

And don't overlook this father-in-law. Reuel is identified as the priest of Midian. We don't know what that means in terms of his relationship with God. But the Midianites were the descendants of Midian, the son of Abraham by his second wife. Perhaps he worshiped the God of Abraham. We know he was a wise man because he later shows up at the Israelite camp and helps Moses figure out how to delegate his administrative and judicial duties. Moses lived with and worked for this man for 40 years and I am sure Reuel had a huge influence on him.

These 40 years of exile were important years in Moses' preparation to be the leader of Israel. Here was a man who was raised as a prince of Egypt working as a lowly shepherd. He thought he had been called to lead his people out of Egypt and instead he was leading sheep around an arid peninsula. God used this time to further mold and shape the character of Moses to make him fit to lead His people. And Moses learned his lessons well. Numbers 12:3 says that Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth. Meekness begins when we trust in God. Meek people trust in God's perfect timing and power and grace to work things out in the best way for his glory and their good. Moses was now ready to receive his commission from God and be a clay pot through which the glory of God could shine. God had providentially preserved Moses from death at the hands of Pharaoh, both at birth and 40 years later. God had providentially prepared Moses to lead his people out of Egypt.

God's loving decision to rescue his people.

And so, we come to the climax of chapter 2, starting in verse 23.

23 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.

Look at the activity of God in these verses. God heard. God remembered. God saw. God knew. This verse is not meant to be placed chronologically when Moses was 80 years old. God is not limited by time.

- He had heard the people's cries from the very first brick they were forced to make. But He was waiting for the right time, when the right man had been seasoned and prepared, when the right Pharaoh was on the throne, and when the people of Israel were sick and tired enough of their mistreatment at the hands of the Egyptians that they would be ready to risk everything to leave.
- God had heard all along but he had also remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all along. He had never forgotten His promise to make their descendants into a great nation and to bless the entire world through them. God's remembering is different than human remembering. God doesn't exist in time. He can't forget the past because there is no past for God. God's remembering is active. Psalm 74:22 says,

Arise, O God, defend your cause; remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day!

- These are parallel lines typical in Hebrew poetry. The parallel to remember is arise! God's remembering is an intention to take action. And He was actively working to fulfill His promise to Abraham, even during those long years of suffering.
- God had seen all along. He had seen every injustice perpetrated on His people. He had seen Pharaoh bribe the midwives to kill the baby

boys. When that didn't work, He had seen the sweet little baby boys tossed into the Nile. He had seen every one of them.

- He had known all along. Not just a knowledge of the facts, but He had purposed from before creation how and when and through whom He would rescue His people. He would show that no one can thwart His purposes. He would demonstrate His infinite wisdom.
- The point of these verses is not that God was just now discovering that His people were in trouble. Rather, now it was time to act according to God's predetermined and precommunicated plan. It was time to get Moses back to Egypt. It was time to bring the mighty nation of Egypt to its knees. It was time to get them to the place where they would not only beg Moses to take his people and go, but that they would willingly lavish riches on them as they left.

God hears. God sees. God knows. Whatever you are going through today, God is actively working. If you are not a follower of Christ, God is actively displaying His glory and His grace in this world for you to see. You need to be reconciled to Him. You are not listening to me by accident. God has providentially brought you here today. Perhaps this is the day of salvation for you. Jesus Christ died and rose from the grave so that sinners like us could be reconciled to God. Repent of your sin. Place your faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin. He rose from the dead! He is the Son of God! His death is acceptable to God as a sacrifice for your sin and it is sufficient to reconcile you to God. I implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God! If you want to talk more about the gospel, e-mail us a prcpastors@peineridgechurch.org. We would love to talk to you.

If you are a follower of Christ, no matter what you are going through now, God sees. God hears your groans and your prayers. Even if He seems far away and silent. God knows your suffering. When I think of some of the desperate times in my life when I cried out to God and I wasn't sure He was listening:

- lying in my son's tiny toddler bed, holding him in my arms and weeping because we had gotten a bad report from the doctor;
- sitting in the waiting room hearing my wife's doctor give me the bad news;
- hearing that my dad was in a coma and not likely to live long;
- sitting in my chair with a Bible in my lap, wondering if there really is a God who hears me when I cry out to Him.
- Those were some dark moments. And in those times, I didn't receive flashes of inspiration, surges of emotion, or any other tangible sense of His presence. And yet, now, looking back on those times, I see that God was setting the stage and building a foundation for the faith that I now have and the work that He has given me to do.

No matter what you are experiencing, no matter what you are suffering, God is actively working in your life to prepare you for an eternity spent rejoicing in Him. He is setting the stage for His purposes to be fulfilled, both universal Kingdom of God purposes and the purpose He has for each of you individually. And you can be sure that He is actively seeking and working for His glory and for your good. He has promised to complete the good work He began in you. He has promised that you will one day be glorified in sinless perfection, a perfect image of God. He has promised to never leave you or forsake you.

God didn't forget about Moses when He was in Midian. He didn't forget about His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And He didn't forget about their descendants as they suffered in Egypt. The demonstration of His great power and His great wisdom was right around the corner. And God hasn't forgotten about you either. That demonstration of His great power at work in you may be right around the corner. God is trustworthy. God is reliable. God is always here, actively present in your life. You can trust Him!