

## **AS ONE AT 10**

### Exodus 2 vs 5-25: Lessons in Failure

4<sup>th</sup> October 2020

In our family, The Disney Film, Prince of Egypt is one of our favourites – well-loved and frequently watched. If we were watching it at this stage of Exodus, we would be enjoying dramatic scenes of Moses as a young adult galloping through Egyptian Streets chariot racing with his brother causing havoc as he goes and paying no attention to the suffering of the Hebrew Slaves as they continue to build huge buildings and giant statues to Pharaoh.

However, whilst we can rely on Disney for entertainment, and a good tune we can't rely on Disney necessarily for an accurate portrayal of this incredible story.

As we come to vs 11 of chapter 2, Moses has become a 40 year old man who had grown up in an Egyptian household with all the luxuries and benefits that entails. He had wealth and privilege and was, as Stephen tells us in Acts 7 educated "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action."

But he also, probably from his mother had been taught about his humble Hebrew roots. Verse 11 tells us that he knew his heritage. He would have been taught the promises of God to Abraham that Israel would one day become a flourishing, numerous nation, with a land and home where they could worship God freely. As Moses looked upon "his own people" suffering in slavery, none of that seemed possible and he couldn't bear to watch the injustice as they were bullied, and beaten into hard labour. His anger and emotion lead him to a crime of passion with massive consequences. He murders an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew and buries him in the sand.

We might think Moses' desire to see justice done was understandable but murdering the Egyptian was not. Moses had been brought up with violence all around him, and he responds to injustice with an aggression of his own. HE behaves just like one of the slave masters and appoints himself as judge, jury and executioner

Stephen suggests in Acts 7 that Moses thought his people would recognise him as their leader as a consequence of his actions, but instead he loses their respect when the next day he challenges two Hebrews who are fighting and they turn on him asking what right he has to confront them when he has committed murder himself.

Murder was not and never would be God's way of bringing justice and Moses problem was that he thought he could save the people by his own works, taking things into his own hands rather than by trusting God and leaving Him to bring about his perfect justice.

Don't we do that so easily? Take situations into our own hands, think we know the best thing to do rather than allow God to take the lead, and to act in his way and in his timing.

Perhaps we get angry, and fly off the handle when life seems unfair. Perhaps at work, when we don't get our way we feel angry and let down and start complaining to all who will listen about the way we've been treated. But anger, frustration, violence or

verbal aggression are not God's way and only lead to further broken relationships and a loss of respect.

It seems that Moses has blown it. But God doesn't give up on him because of his failure, but he does have important lessons for him to learn before he will be ready to rescue the slaves from Egypt.

Similarly, God's purposes are not thwarted by our weakness and failure, but we do need refining and pruning in order to grow in Christlikeness and the ways of God. And that can be tough and painful and take time. And that is what God does with Moses when he flees from Pharaoh into the desert. In the years ahead, God refines him to become the leader that He wants him to be that he might be ready to bring about God's bigger purpose. And yes, it's tough but there are also wonderful blessing of God's grace along the way that Moses receives even though he doesn't deserve it.

There are a number of lessons Moses needed to learn in the wilderness away from Egypt before he was ready to return to Pharaoh.

We have time for just two this morning...

### **1. Moses needed to learn to be a servant not a slave driver**

We know that Moses has a strong sense of justice. As he stumbles upon the scene in Midian where 7 young women are being harangued by some Shepherds, he sees injustice being done again and steps in to sort it out, to rescue the situation. Moses gets rid of the shepherds, draws water and then feeds their flocks.

Already it seems Moses has learned some lessons. This time he doesn't use the violence of an Egyptian slave driver to deal with the Shepherds and drive them away. Not only that, he then serves this group of girls by drawing water for them and feeding their sheep. It was a menial task to water the flocks, one that an Egyptian prince would never do. In fact, Genesis 46 tells us that all Shepherds were detestable to Egyptians so Moses was already going against his upbringing. He is learning, in humility to serve others, to become a Shepherd himself, and one day God will call him from Shepherding sheep to shepherd God's people and lead them out of Egypt.

This time Moses sense of injustice towards those young women had integrity and wisdom and he earned their respect and the respect of their father who invites him into his home and even gives him Zipporah to marry.

One commentator sums it up saying "Moses stooped to serve and by learning to serve he was learning to lead, for all God's leaders are servants."

Out of acute failure God teaches wonderful lessons of Grace. As he refined Moses, so he will refine us even when we think our failure is unredeemable. You see if, as Tim said last week all Christians are to some extent leaders (or influencers) in the world around us then we must all become servants of God and of other people, using our passions and gifts for Him and not for our own benefit.

So, ask yourself today – what are you passionate about? How can you serve others with that passion in a way that honours God? What can you do in our church community? Perhaps in our school, with our children or young people? Could you offer to help those still isolated and stuck inside? Could you create something/cook something/send a note/offer practical support.

No one has gone so far from him that he cannot bring them back and use them for his glory and purposes. Do you believe that? And He has given us the greatest model of servanthood to emulate – Jesus Christ, the Shepherd King, the Servant King.

Matthews Gospel tells us he came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. He served us to the point of his sacrificial death on our behalf, to remove our sin and give us new life! Our call, in loving response to all he has done is to serve him and others in humility and with Grace and as we do so, we will bring God glory and enjoy the delight of his blessing.

1. Secondly, **Moses began to learn who He was and Whose He was.** He discovered his true identity.

We can have some sympathy with Moses as he tries to work out who he is and where he belongs. His true identity as a Hebrew was so very far from his experience of being brought up as an Egyptian prince. The irony is that in fleeing to Midian, and joining the nomadic family of a Priest he finds himself in the land that as a Hebrew is his true Home. Canaan. A place where he finds rest and peace amongst the Midianites who worshipped God, the Father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Here, free to worship and to grow in his relationship with the God of Israel, His God He finds out who he really is

But most importantly, Moses learns who God really is. He learns about his Justice, power and compassion. He learns that spontaneous fits of violent anger and murder are not God's way of bringing judgement on the people. He learns that God keeps the promises he made to Abraham that Israel will be a mighty nation, numerous and blessed with a land which they can call home but He will do it in his way, by his power and in His timing..

And he learnt to love the land that God had promised his people. He learnt what it meant to be God's mouth piece, and servant. He learnt to trust His Lord, and he learnt to listen and obey the call on his life. He learnt that his life belonged to God. He learnt that God is the true rescuer and that Moses could do nothing in his own strength or by his own actions – As a consequence of his failure, Moses would learn to live by Faith. It would take another 40 years but God had a plan for him, and he was to equip him to fulfil his purposes.

Do you ever find yourselves in those conversations with people you've just met which end up with being asked...so "What do you do?" – I never liked that question....and it especially made me feel awkward as a young mum at home looking after my children, without paid work. And that's because we seem to be so set on our identity being caught up in what we do rather than who we belong to. Moses Identity had been stripped away – no longer prince of Egypt – instead nomadic humble shepherd. But the Christian, first and foremost is a forgiven child of God. We belong to Him and that is who we are. Out of acute failure, Moses found his true identity and it changed his life forever. He was blessed with an earthly family, but he came to know God too...deeply and intimately.

Through receiving the grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ our lives can be changed forever – the insecurities we feel about our place in the world, or our fears perhaps when we lose our jobs and don't feel we know are purpose any more do not need to consume us because we are first and foremost children of God, and he has purpose for our lives that we might love him, worship him, serve him and serve others. We belong to him.

## **CONCLUSSION**

Let's be honest, we all fail! I failed spectacularly at school (through my own fault really) – but we can fail in all sorts of other areas; some serious and some not so

serious – in our work, in relationships, in academic study, in our attempts to make cakes, or driving tests or music exams....in all sorts of ways.

But failure in the hands of a loving Sovereign God can be used for his glory and purpose. No one is a right off! And as one writer said it is “only after we fail that we become aware that it is God and not ourselves who is working.” He will never stop being at work in us, transforming us to become more like his son. It is his work and not ours!

Ephesians 2: 10 says that we are “God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” You are the work of God’s hands and he doesn’t make mistakes. He has plans for you – He has good works for us to do, and through our failures, and our successes he is preparing us, just as he did Moses to do good works- to serve Him!

The Exodus story is God’s story - It’s not Moses and it’s not ours. It’s His. His plan to save his suffering people, and his plan to save all people. Yes, Moses was a great Rescuer, but Christ himself is the greatest rescuer! And God’s deep heart breaking concern for Israel that led him to send Moses is a deep heart breaking concern for the whole world...so much that he sent his son on the greatest rescue mission ever and for me, in all my brokenness and failure I am so deeply deeply grateful that he did.