



**Series:** Exodus: Out of Egypt

**Date:** March 13, 2022

**Speaker:** Spence Shelton, *Lead Pastor*

**Text:** Exodus 4:18-31

**Title:** Going God's Way

### Intro

Good morning, Mercy Family. Good morning to Mercy Providence Rd! I plan to be with you guys next week at 9am but I'm glad to be back here today with our Northeast Fam! And hey how about our campus directors preaching God's word to us last week!! I got to sit in both, and it was awesome to see. We've got some great days ahead here at Mercy Church that is for sure.

Hey, you may have heard this past week we started a weekly FAST on Tuesdays as a way to celebrate the season of LENT together. Now listen LENT represents the 40 days before Easter. Lent is not a biblically mandated practice. It's just an exercise that churches throughout history have observed as a way to prepare itself for the celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ. So, if

you want to jump in, we'd love for you to participate. BUT, if you come out of a background where LENT was super legalistic or something, don't worry about it. The purpose is drawing near to Christ and asking him to do a WORK this easter in our hearts and in the hearts of those we know. And listen - my big prayer - I'm asking God to bring 200 people who don't know the gospel to our worship services. Here's why - that is just a number. BUT it's a number too big for me to control. God is going to have to move in your hearts for this to happen and you are going to have to be compelled by him to bring your non-Christian friends to Easter. I'm going to make the gospel clear & I'm going to give them a chance to respond. But you gotta bring em.

MOST of the time we try to equip you to share your faith on your own. Church is a big scary event to attend for a lot of Christians. BUT, on easter, it's a really easy invite. I just want you to make a list of 5 people or 5 families or whatever. And start praying for them during lent. See which one God puts in front of you for a conversation. And let's see what he does.

SO MANY PEOPLE are one invitation away from their eternity changing. So, let's get before God during lent on behalf of people we know and love...and see what he does!

OK - On to Exodus! Chapter 4.





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Over the past 2 weeks we've seen Moses in a conversation with God. God has given Moses the assignment to go bring Israel OUT of Egypt so that they can worship him. **And over those two Sundays we saw that what was going to give Moses the courage to accept this call was Moses' view of God. Because we've been saying it since day 1 of this series - THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR LIFE - Is what you think about God.**

Moses Got the assignment and he felt like it was TOO BIG, and he was TOO weak. So, he hesitated. And God didn't respond by making Moses feel good about himself. God responded by saying GOD WILL BE WITH YOU MOSES. The great I AM will be with you.  
**Power & Strength & Security & VICTORY come NOT from your ability but from MY PRESENCE.**

Today Moses begins his journey to Egypt. And As Moses begins to follow God...His journey is going to be revealing to you and I of what it means for us to follow God. As simple as that sounds it's important because I think often the decision around faith & choosing to be a Christian isn't as much about the facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus. I actually think the real question is...YEAH ok but how is this going to impact my life? What will I have to give up? What will need to change? What am I going to

GET? They are life experience questions. It's not just is it true but is it worth it.

And I think just about every Christian goes through what we see in Moses' first few steps towards Egypt today. As Moses begins to follow God his life starts to change. Like he didn't just make a decision up on Mount Horeb to follow God during an emotional moment in the last song the burning bush was playing. He didn't check a box...Turn in a card...And then say thank you God for my eternal security I feel better today and then go on living HIS LIFE...HIS WAY.

Moses first few steps will reveal to us that choosing God...its more than a decision. It IS THAT. But the decision is choosing a whole new WAY of life. And this will likely reveal some things today. This is a heart check message. Do I just want God's endorsement on MY LIFE & MY WAY...or am I going to God's way God's way?

God calls you to follow him **Exodus 4.18-23: God's way, not my way.**

Cause it's easy to say yes to God CONDITIONALLY. To follow God on our terms. But Moses is going to have to follow God on God's terms. He's going to experience some blessings from God & conflict with God in these few verses. And so will you as you begin to follow God. And



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then in the end something really cool happens. I'm going to walk through the passage showing you 4 distinctions between god's way & our way. And one really awesome result of doing so.

**18** Then Moses went back to his father-in-law, Jethro, and said to him, "Please let me return to my relatives in Egypt and see if they are still living."

Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

**God's way calls us to count the cost.**

It was no small thing for Moses to leave Midian. He'd been there for 40 years. He had a stable life even if it was a simple life. But God called him, so he went. It was also no small thing for Jethro to say, "go in peace." That meant losing the man who presumably would take over his work. The heir to his estate. Not only was it financially unsettling, but this also meant saying goodbye to his daughter and grandson. He had no certainty of the future. He didn't tell them to facetime him once they got to Egypt. Going to Egypt is HARD. And SENDING your children to Egypt is HARDER.

Count the cost is a phrase Jesus uses in Luke 14. Where he uses a couple of parables to say each person should

add up everything he or she has of value in their lives. And be willing to let go of ALL of it for the name of Jesus. Let's get real for a second. One of the big reasons the American church - who has so many people and resources - doesn't FLOOD the world with missionaries trying to get the gospel to the lost - is that we don't want to count the cost. The reason we don't go to our NEIGHBOR with the gospel - we don't want to count the reputation cost. We don't go to our co-workers because we don't want to count the career cost. **To that I say - the most important thing in your life is what you think about God.** Whether you realize it or not. And if you say yes to God UNLESS it threatens your career.... or yes to God UNLESS it threatens to disrupt your neighborly friendship...yes unless it will get awkward in your home. Yes, UNLESS IT MEANS GIVING MY GROWN CHILD MY BLESSING TO GO ACROSS THE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL. Where your yes to God has contingencies, you've revealed your true gods.

Look I'm right in that age group where I have 5 years left before my oldest is college aged. So, I feel like I can see the struggle really clearly between grown children and their parents. With every grey hair & aching cartilage in my bum knee on these cold mornings my sympathy for empty nesters INCREASES and my patience with you youngin's is...actually I'm coming to love you more & be inspired by



you more. But Parents - let me tell you my college staff tells me the number one obstacle to college students going on mission with their summer - is Christian parents. It's easier to send a Christian with lost parents than one with Christian parents. You gotta count the cost.

Cause what is the alternative? Why don't you count the cost of Conditionally obeying God too? Of teaching your children to go ONLY when its comfortable. Which it never is. So, we will make weak disciples of our kids. The cost of disobedience is lost people dying without Jesus and saved people like us being wooed away from God by the comforts of this world.

Last thing I'll say here - Moses was 80. Which means it is **never** too late to obey God's call to give up your stable life to do what God calls you to do. If you are under 100 years old...your greatest days of faith are AHEAD of you. Don't look back at that college mission trip 30 years ago and think...oh those were the days where we were sold out for God. Instead look ahead! What does God have NEXT? Oh, I could get on a soapbox here. But I won't. Let's keep going.

What else happens when we go God's way God's way?

**19** Now in Midian the Lord told Moses, "Return to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead." **20** So

Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took God's staff in his hand.

Verse 20 says Moses took God's staff in his hand. See up until this point it was Moses' staff. But earlier in this chapter we saw God turn Moses' staff into a snake and then back into a staff again. And from that moment on, Moses called the staff God's staff. And it became a tool to bring God's power to bear in all the plagues and miracles God would work through Moses. The same would happen for Aaron and his staff. And what I know is that when we recognize our things are really God's things for God's work...and we with open hands put allow them to be used for his work...he does more than we could ever ask or imagine.

**God's way tells us our things are really God's things**

This isn't surprising. People are God's plan A for advancing the gospel around the world. So surely, he would use the things HE has given us to accomplish this mission. A really powerful exercise for you to do would be to take inventory of what God has given you. of all your things and then said ok these are really God's things for God's work not my things. And say ok God...what do you want to do with these things?



- This is God's house, God's car, God's salary, God's iPhone God's relationship, God's vacation home, God's career, God's company, God's time off, keep going... God's softball team, God's \_\_\_\_\_. What do YOU want to use these for God?
- **SOULWORK - TAKE INVENTORY. Top 10 most prized things.** LEVERAGE THEM FOR THE KINGDOM. Not just give them away - see yourself as a steward.

I've been thinking about this even here with Mercy. Mercy isn't Spence's church. It's God's church. So, I've had to say again to the Lord - Ok Lord, what do YOU want to do with YOUR church? It's not mine, it's yours. Our Providence Rd campus is out of room...OK God what do YOU want? Our Easter services are YOUR easter services - what do YOU want? Our budget is YOUR budget - What do you want? OUR PEOPLE - what do you want?

And keeping that before the Lord is keeping us focused on HIS mission to reach the lost and see a gospel awakening come to Charlotte. Not for our glory but for his! It keeps me from building a church that is a cruise liner full of programs to entertain everyone and instead keeps me focused on building an aircraft carrier that is ready to equip you & send you to take the fight to the gates of hell

for the sake of the lost in our community and around the world. Because this church is HIS church. About HIS mission not my comfort. So, we may not look pretty. We want to have quality facilities that honor the Lord and facilitate our growing ministry here. But quality is different than comfort. God gave his church a mission, not an activities agenda to entertain ourselves. So, we will do everything we can to leverage everything we have for the sake of the mission. That's a wartime mentality.

Take inventory of your life. The result may be you budget more money to give to mission. Next week I'm going to give you a clear opportunity to do that. Next week is compassion Sunday here at Mercy. one of our values is we help people take their next step. I'm going to give you an EASY and FUN and REWARDING next step next week.

Compassion International, one of my favorite ministry partners we have, is coming back for our second ever compassion Sunday. You'll get to hear about how we partner with them to release children from poverty in the name of Jesus. And how our entire focus will be on Nairobi, Kenya where we will also be planting a church this summer. So cool. Do NOT miss that. And in between this week and that, do some soul work with that inventory.



**21** The Lord instructed Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, make sure you do before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put within your power. But I will harden his heart<sup>a</sup> so that he won’t let the people go. **22** And you will say to Pharaoh: This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son. **23** I told you: Let my son go so that he may worship me, but you refused to let him go. Look, I am about to kill your firstborn son!”

This is like a little quick summary of EVERYTHING that is about to happen. Like if you had to tell the Star Wars story in 3 sentences.

1. The Skywalker family has generational daddy issues
2. Instead of counseling they wage epic wars with cool light sabers
3. In the end good wins over evil and all the Skywalkers die. Kind of.

Ok couple things here very important to understand about following God God’s way. I’m going to go into the deep end of the pool here for a second ok. So, let’s put our theological swimsuit on. Obviously a 1 piece. And go exploring. We are going to talk about God’s Sovereignty over an evil guy and God’s faithfulness to his word.

Notice how he says, “I will harden his heart so that he won’t let the people go.” That can be a pretty troubling phrase at first, right? Wait a minute I thought God was not the author of evil. How can God CAUSE pharaoh to be hardened against God and then punish him for it? Our skeptical minds start sniffing out a contradiction that...in our heads...threatens to unravel our trust in God. And if you are thinking this way, you are not the first. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome about this very thing. Here’s how he said it. After 8 chapters talking about God’s love & goodness & plan to save all who turn to him through an act of immense sacrifice, he says...

**14** What should we say then? Is there injustice with God? Absolutely not!... **17** For the Scripture tells Pharaoh, I raised you up for this reason so that I may display my power in you and that my name may be proclaimed in the whole earth. **18** So then, he has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

**19** You will say to me, therefore, “Why then does he still find fault? For who resists his will?” **20** On the contrary, who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? Will what is formed say to the one who formed it, “Why did you make me like this?” **21** Or has the potter no right over the clay, to make from the same lump one piece of pottery for honor and another for dishonor? **22** And what if God,



wanting to display his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience objects of wrath prepared for destruction? 23 And what if he did this to make known the riches of his glory on objects of mercy that he prepared beforehand for glory — 24 on us, the ones he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? -- Romans 9:14-24 (CSB)

In short summary - Paul is saying the same thing God said to Moses in our text last week. When it comes to God's sovereign control - even over bad things - there are a couple of things we must remember:

**On God's sovereignty over pharaoh**

1. **God, his ways & thoughts, are higher than our ways & thoughts.** He doesn't answer to us, we answer to him. What would the alternative be? A small god who we can completely understand? That wouldn't be a very impressive God. No, we have to have enough humility to recognize we are created & he is creator. That's a huge challenge but your other option is a puny God. A finite God. You can either have a small god you can FULLY understand but who therefore is limited in power & sovereignty OR you can have a God infinite in power & sovereignty...but you can't comprehend

EVERYTHING about him.

2. **God's treatment of Pharaoh is FAIR, his treatment of us is unfair.** I know your tuning fork in your heart went off. It's not FAIR to treat pharaoh this way. ACTUALLY, God is very patient with pharaoh as we will see. 10 plagues and that's after Pharaoh was already evil towards the Jews before Moses ever got there. Pharaoh deserved judgment for his sin. Which makes sense because God is a just God. What is NOT fair - is how God treats us. When we ask Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart...we must first ask - why did God SOFTEN my heart to his love? As a sinner I DESERVE the punishment of God. THAT is true justice. And yet, God not only sent his son to PAY for my just punishment on the cross. THAT IS THE GREATEST INJUSTICE OF ALL TIME. SO YES, GOD WAS UNFAIR - BUT HE WAS UNFAIR TO JESUS NOT TO PHARAOH. AND HE WAS UNFAIR TO YOU - if you are in Christ, he actually softened your heart - he HUMBLED YOU from your pride and gave you ears to hear - so that you would receive his offer of forgiveness which



you did not deserve.

3. **God keeps his promises.** God is telling Moses the ending before he gets started. You and I need to find great comfort that he does the same with us the day he saves us. He says you will have suffering. You will have trouble. BUT...I'm with you. I'm working things for your good. I've prepared a place for you in eternity. And you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Why does that matter? Because it empowers you to stand up & go God's way. Because his way ends in certain victory.

### **God's way is marked by his undeserved mercy & his certain victory**

Now that is a very brief theological deep dive. I hope it helps. BUT really smart people have grappled with this idea for a long time. So, if you have questions still...THAT'S GOOD. God is not scared of your questions, ok? And here at this church we want your questions to be fuel that drives you towards God. So, discuss them in your community group and talk with our pastors. Let's Ted Lasso this thing and be humbly curious about God, not judgmental.

Ok now on to the strangest moment I think recorded in the whole book of exodus. All the plagues...got nothing on this. Here we go.

**24** On the trip, at an overnight campsite, it happened that the Lord confronted him and intended to put him to death. **25** So Zipporah took a flint, cut off her son's foreskin, threw it at Moses's feet, and said, "You are a bridegroom of blood to me!" **26** So he let him alone. At that time, she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood," referring to the circumcision.

OK. I'm reading this during the week thinking.... Why didn't I give this passage to the other guy's last week? It's a very strange encounter but it actually can be summarized really simply and not surprisingly - because it's the bible - It has a very helpful application for us. The application is not to surprise-emergency-circumcise your son in his sleep. That's not it.

Here's the deal. God told Abraham in Genesis 17 that all of Abraham's offspring should be circumcised. It's a sign in the OT that sets apart God's people. So, here is Moses going God's way BUT his son Gershom isn't circumcised. And he knew better. SO, while the text isn't clear whether God is about to kill Moses or Gershom...what IS clear is God will not ALLOW Moses to go forward on his



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assignment while Moses is actively disobeying his command. **ESPECIALLY THIS COMMAND.** Because this mark was the way by which his people made their commitment to him visible. It's the mark of belief & belonging for God's people.

God is not going to be mocked by Moses checking off all the outwardly visible boxes of obedience all the while disobeying him in the hidden areas of life. Thank God for the strength and presence of mind of Zipporah. She saved the family. Gershom probably wasn't happy, but they were spared. Praise God for strong women.

### **God's way is marked by a heart of obedience**

See circumcision was something between the people and God. Not like they went around using it as their ID badge all the time you know. That would violate some other commands. But it was a sign of hearts fully devoted to God. Which is why the New Testament talks about salvation as the circumcision of the heart. God is not after your outward religiosity...he's after your heart! This is the repeated refrain from scripture. Yes, you will still sin even if you are a Christian. But does your sin grieve you? are you casual about your sin? Do you grade sins as some are big deals and some aren't? That's probably a form of

self-righteousness in your heart. A way to get away with the sins you really like by trivializing them. You need to get before the Lord! He does call you into his mission, but he will not be mocked by false religion. Your obedience to him starts in your heart not your feet.

When your sin grieves you...Do you return to your first love and repent? God knows you aren't perfect. He knows you will mess up. That's WHY he sent Christ. To pay for your sin. Your faith in what Christ has done for you...that is your sign of the covenant. And then your public sign that Christ gives so you are known by others as one of his - That's believer's baptism. A step some of you need to take!

I told you I'd show you 4 marks of God's way. And then the really cool fruit. Here's the fruit:

**27** Now the Lord had said to Aaron, "Go and meet Moses in the wilderness." So, he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. **28** Moses told Aaron everything the Lord had sent him to say, and about all the signs he had commanded him to do. **29** Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the Israelites. **30** Aaron repeated everything the Lord had said to Moses and performed the signs before the people. **31** The



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people believed, and when they heard that the Lord had paid attention to them and that he had seen their misery, they knelt low and worshiped.

### **The Fruit of God's way - Hope-Filled Worship**

Look at the passage. The people believed because of the signs. BUT you know what made them kneel and worship? The news that God paid attention to them. That God had seen their misery. Remember a couple weeks back end of Ex 1? God heard, God saw, God remembered, God knew.

The announcement of the gospel carries the same POWER to the heart as the announcement of God's deliverance carried to the Israelites. God sees you in your complete bondage to your sin. God sees you. In a room full of people...God doesn't see a crowd. GOD IS PAYING ATTENTION TO YOU. RIGHT NOW. The full attention of God is on you. He's seen your misery. And he's sent you here so you can HEAR the announcement of his plan of salvation for you!

The Gospel is God's good news that yes you are a sinner and yes you CANNOT save yourself. BUT God who is rich in mercy while you were still in your sin sent Jesus to pay for your sin and to break the chains sin has on you. And in

receiving it you can be FREE to worship. Worship with a heart full of hope of Romans 8:1.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, -- Romans 8:1

The people of God are going to worship that hope now. "Let Every Breath be praise" - The idea is embedded into the Chorus. If you are new to mercy, it's a song our church wrote a couple of years ago as a way to say EVERYTHING...My whole heart, all my things, all my life...it's not mine, it's yours. It's a prayer of surrender. It's the prayer of one going God's way.

STAND UP AT BOTH CAMPUSES