



Series: Exodus: Out of Egypt

Date: April 24, 2022

Speaker: Spence Shelton, *Lead Pastor*

Text: Exodus 7:14-25

Title: The River of Blood

Introduction

Good morning! Good morning Prov Rd & Good morning to our Mercy Northeast campus! Love you guys. Joseph Anderson your campus director there has been sharing with me about what God is doing at MNE. Several of you have reached out to me to let me know what God is doing in your life through Mercy. I will be with you guys' next weekend during the first service & am looking forward to it.

What an incredible weekend we had last weekend Mercy Church at both of our campuses. I was SO proud of our church last weekend. Ya'll prayed, ya'll showed up. You cared for our second tragedy in a month by serving a grieving family on Saturday. And then man Sunday ya'll came...expectant. One of our values is that we expect God to change a life today. Any

Day. And ya'll live & breathe that. This church believes God is working and I LOVE IT.

We challenged you to invite 200 people and by every estimate you did way more than that. Record attendance over 1400 people & 5 baptisms & some people made professions of faith. People were taking next steps all over the place. AND most importantly the gospel was proclaimed that if Jesus got out of the grave, there's hope for sinners! AMEN!?!

If you are new here my name is Spence and I have the distinct joy to serve as the lead pastor here at Mercy Church. We are here to help all people...don't matter how long you've been a Christian...don't matter your age, race, or income...we are here to help all people take their next step in following Jesus. And we want to help you!

Maybe that step is baptism. Maybe it's starting point - if you think mercy is the church for you and we'd love to help you figure it out - go to starting point. Maybe it's a step just between you and the Lord where you want to read your bible every day because man nothing will be more impactful in your walk with Jesus than that. Well, we'll help you figure out how to get started. By the way if you don't own a bible - it would be our JOY to give you one. We have them available for free every week out in the lobby. Lots of versions out there...the one we give you is the same version I preach through each





weekend in here. Whatever it is man we want to help you take a next step.

Speaking of the bible - if you have a bible I want you to open it up to the book of exodus. It's right after genesis. Make your way to chapter 7 and we are going to get after it.

RECAP

Since we weren't in it last weekend let me catch you up on what has happened and where we are in the account. God's people have been in slavery for 400 years. Waiting for the deliverance he promised he would bring. They don't give up waiting because their parents and their parents parents have passed down a legacy of trusting God even when he seems silent. He's faithful even in the silence. Most important thing in their captivity - was what they thought about God. that belief - that God is big enough, loving enough, & strong enough to keep his promise - carried them for generations.

And now Moses comes on the scene - born to a Hebrew family but raised by Egyptians. And not just any Egyptians - raised in Pharaoh's very home. Born a slave but raised by slave owners. Wild right? Well that identity crisis reaches a head when Moses murders an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew.

Moses flees for fear of death. And is out in the wilderness for 40 years. He marries & has a family. And then God shows up

to Moses. Shows up in a burning bush and commissions Moses to be his agent of deliverance for his people. And Moses is hesitant. Because he thinks he's not smart or strong enough to do it. God doesn't correct him saying no Moses you are smart. God says I WILL BE WITH YOU. And the presence of God - that becomes the source of confidence for carrying out the assignment God gave Moses. Same thing for us. So, Moses & his brother Aaron come into Egypt & summon all their courage & demand pharaoh let God's people go. And Pharaoh says no. And things got harder. Sometimes obeying God means things will get harder. And there was a big lesson in there of whether or not we will trust God when things get difficult as we obey him.

All that leads us up to Chapter 7. Verse 14. And since some of you may be new to the bible. And the bible is going to be your absolute most essential tool for following Jesus...today I want to model good bible study for you. Gonna walk through these 12 verses and stop along the way to talk about some things. Then we are going to ask 3 questions that you can ask about ANY passage of the bible you are reading. What does this show me about God? What does it show me about humanity (me)? And how does it point me to Jesus?

14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hard: He refuses to let the people go.



Sometimes the Lord hardens his heart, and sometimes it's just observed that Pharaoh's heart is hard, and sometimes Pharaoh hardens his own heart. But one thing is for sure - Pharaoh becomes an example of what not to do.

- 12 Watch out, brothers and sisters, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception -- Hebrews 3:12-13

Because of his hard heart, he refuses to obey God. And the outcome will be the same in your life. If your heart is hardened to God, you will of course disobey him. And I see this with people. They don't CARE what God says. They want to do what they want to do. Pharaoh is, in literary terms, a foil. An example of what not to do. Really an example of Proverbs 16.18 - Pride goes before a fall.

15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning. When you see him walking out to the water, stand ready to meet him by the bank of the Nile. Take in your hand the staff that turned into a snake.

- Recap! If you missed two weeks ago - Moses & Pharaoh already had a little showdown. Moses & Aaron show up at Pharaoh's house and say, "God says let my people go so they may worship me in the wilderness." Pharaoh says no. SO Aaron does what God told him to do in such a scenario - Throw your

staff down & it will turn into a snake. Aaron does it. BUT then Pharaoh's sorcerers throw their staffs down & THEY turn into snakes. So now you've got LOTS of snakes. We don't know how many. 2 Timothy 3.8 seems to indicate there were two sorcerers here. Jannes & Jambres. But we don't know. Even if it's just 3 snakes - it's TOO many because ONE snake is too many snakes.

- But Aaron' staff snake swallows up pharaoh's staff snakes. And then Aaron picks up his snake & as he does it turns into a staff again. WILD foreshadowing that even though Pharaoh APPEARS to have the power over God's people, God's people will prevail.
- Ok that's what HAPPENED. And still pharaoh's heart was hard, so he didn't let God's people go. SO, Moses & Aaron are coming back the next day.

16 Tell him: The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to tell you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness....

Good moment to reinforce something from a few weeks ago. When God says let my people go...it's for a purpose. SO THAT they may worship me. God saves them NOT JUST TO SAVE THEM **FROM** EGYPT, BUT TO SAVE THEM **TO** HIMSELF. He



does the same with you. You know God desires so much more than just getting you out of hell. When he saves you, he gives you the title Son or Daughter. You aren't just some guilty person who is set free. Though that alone is incredible and worthy of praising him. But you are brought into a family so that you can worship him in his presence. That's where joy in the Christian life is. Some of you have never experienced what the bible calls reconciliation with God. You are estranged. You are offered reconciliation. You know how you can start to get there? The Lord's Prayer. I dare you to pray it every day. Matthew 6. Go to it and read it out loud.

But so far you have not listened.

God says to Moses tell pharaoh I told you to let them go so they may worship me...But Pharaoh...you aren't listening. You are hearing but not listening. The sound waves made it to your ears, but the message didn't make it to your heart. Now THAT my friends...will PREACH. What is keeping pharaoh from listening? A heart hardened by Pride. And so, when we ask our 3 questions...we are certainly coming back to this right here. Because Pharaoh is revealing something VERY, VERY common and dangerous about the human condition. His pride keeps him from listening to God.

17 This is what the Lord says: Here is how you will know that I am the Lord. Watch. I am about to strike the water in the Nile

with the staff in my hand, and it will turn to blood. 18 The fish in the Nile will die, the river will stink, and the Egyptians will be unable to drink water from it."

Ok this is the announcement of the first of what will be a series of plagues. 10 in all. That will be very dramatic and very intentional. This is not a random act of power. They have a specific purpose - "here's how you will know I am the lord." Just like every culture, the Egyptians had gods they worshiped. And one of those gods was the god of the Nile. The river god hapi. This is not a random act. It is a direct challenge to one of the Egyptian gods by the God of the Israelites.

19 So the Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron: Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt — over their rivers, canals, ponds, and all their water reservoirs — and they will become blood. There will be blood throughout the land of Egypt, even in wooden and stone containers."

This wasn't just the Nile. This was everywhere. Like Egyptians in their homes with no idea what's going on. Just trying to bake their bread & steam their broccoli for dinner tonight. And all the sudden the water they are steaming with turns to blood. Courtney would already be in the chariot driving to Hebrew-fil-a. See pharaoh's rejection of God affected all of Egypt. For 7 days. Never just pharaoh. WHY? Because God is always doing more than you know. Always. In each home God is creating discomfort that's going to lead to questions. And in the end some Egyptians are going to leave with Israel. This



was done so that all of Egypt may know who the true God was.

20 Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded; in the sight of Pharaoh and his officials, he raised the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile was turned to blood. 21 The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad the Egyptians could not drink water from it. There was blood throughout the land of Egypt.

Do you know the smell of dead fish? My college roommate just had his birthday on Tuesday. So, our first year living together his birthday comes around in mid-april and you know, we've gotten to know each other and had a great year. He and I and 6 other guys had decided to live together in a house the following year. So here we are right before spring break and Michael, one of our roommates, decided it would be a fun birthday prank to put a dead fish in Bill's car. We figure - it will take bill 3 hours to find it. What we did not know - Bill was planning to sell this car. So right after Michael does this, he drives it home and parks it in the driveway where it stays completely shut... in a late April heat wave... for 5 days. And I found out this week his dad was the one that discovered it. Explains why he was skeptical of us from then on. Point is - imagine that smell...LITERALLY EVERYWHERE YOU GO. No going out for fresh air. That is the air. And that smell was combined with no water. For 7 days. It wasn't life and death at that point, but it was a major disruption in life for the whole

nation. **the river god of Egypt is now bloodied by the God of the Hebrews.**

22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same thing by their occult practices.

Now here's what's interesting - They didn't reverse it. Like that would have been more impressive. Instead, they mimicked what God did. They couldn't undo it either. God is the one who stops this plague and in the next plague...Pharaoh went to Moses & Aaron, not to these magicians, to beg for the plague to stop. There are things that look like they have the power of God. But they are false gods. Imposters. and eventually prove powerless when compared to God. If you don't know what they are, just ask somebody who knows you. What things in my life do my actions & speech reveal to be imitations of God to me? Cause I don't want to go down Pharaoh's road but blind spots are what they are.

So, Pharaoh's heart was hard, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said. 23 Pharaoh turned around, went into his palace, and didn't take even this to heart. Pharaoh didn't even wait for the blood to turn back into water. He just saw enough to think...ok maybe this God isn't the most powerful. So, I'm done with this. I'm choosing to ignore the problem because it might mean me facing God. And I don't want to do that. Their God might be doing something here, but I really don't want to deal with that. My guys do a pretty



good imitation. And I can control them. So, I'm not listening. It's so easy for us to ignore the one true God when we can get a cheap imitation that we can control. The problem with the imitation....

24 All the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink because they could not drink the water from the river. 25 Seven days passed after the Lord struck the Nile. -- Exodus 7:14-25

Ok Remember our 3 questions - What does this tell me about God? What does this tell me about humanity? How does it point to Jesus? You do that you'll get incredible fruit from God's word over time.
Here's what this plague & really all the plagues show us about God¹

1. The plagues are showing us God is the God of creation.

And if this is true, then we are most alive when we are walking in step with him. The plagues aren't random. They are purposeful. What is happening in each one of these is God is undoing creation. In Genesis 1-2 God brought order out of chaos. Now here in exodus he's bringing chaos out of order. Why? To show that when you disobey him you experience the

opposite of the way life is supposed to be. You are meant to walk in harmony with him and his creation. And when we sin, we fall out of harmony or fellowship with God. And our life experiences the effect of that. Sin doesn't just incur the wrath of God. It does. But it also corrupts the created order of things. We experience a corrupted version of life. Here's why this matters - when we talk about following God's way in life many people hear that as "restrictive" on their freedoms. Like I want to DO ME. BE ME. And God will restrict that. Well, the problem with that whole assumption is that your definition of freedom is you doing whatever you want. I would argue that's absurd. My old pastor, J.D. Greear, used to say imagine a fish getting mad at how restricted he was by living in water. He wants to go live on land. He watched little mermaid. He wants to follow his heart and be free from the trappings of water. So, he jumps out of the water onto land to live free. And lives in that freedom for...5 minutes. Then dies. WHY? Because he was MADE for water. That is the enlightenment view of freedom, and it will kill you. Because freedom isn't do whatever you want - freedom is to be unencumbered to live how you were CREATED to live. The plagues are reminding us GOD is the creator & has complete control over creation. To live apart from him is not freedom at all.

¹ This section is inspired by J.D. Greear sermon "a glimpse of freedom" in his series "Breakout". J.D. used the framework of the plagues teaching us

God is Creator, Savior, & the only God. While my framework is a little different, I give him credit for the inspiration.



2. The plagues are showing us that **God is the only God.**

There is a spot in between plague 9 & 10 where God is going to say to Pharaoh (9.14) that the plagues are directed at Pharaoh so he will know there are no other Gods like him. He alone is God. Like a lot of people Pharaoh is not so much an atheist as he is a pluralist. Egypt has their gods and so do the Hebrews. Pharaoh thinks - my guys have some power just like Moses & Aaron.

So, what does God do? God begins to systematically wipe out his gods. Beginning right here with the river god "hapi" that some scholars say Pharaoh would come out each morning to pay homage to. Right here in the morning God is showing power over the gods of Egypt. Figuratively killing the river god by turning this god red with blood. The same will happen with the sun God, the fertility god (which was a woman's body with a head of a frog. New meaning to "ribbit."), the cow god, and even pharaoh himself. The plagues are plagues of darkness, frogs, diseased cattle, and death of pharaoh's son. In the plagues God is showing power over the powerless Egyptian gods. And the consistent message of Christianity is that there is only one God. And if you say "yeah that's arrogant to say there's only one God. And only one way to know him." Well, that's not what I'm trying to do. BUT that's who he reveals himself to be. I'm just the mail man. What we can't do is change God into something we like a little more. It's up to you. Believe it or reject it.

3. **The plagues show us God is merciful**

The river was filled with blood...for 7 days. But then God turned it back. Keep reading and what you'll see is time after time in these plagues...as soon as Pharaoh goes and says "OK OK PLEASE STOP" ...God relents. He pulls back. He is merciful and patient with Pharaoh when he didn't have to be. And ya'll sometimes God lets you experience the effect of your sin as an act of MERCY towards you. Not because he's cruel or vindictive but because he's patient & loving!

9 The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. -- 2 Peter 3:9

And if you will turn to him...you will experience the God of redemption.

What does this show us about humanity?

To answer that question, we look at Pharaoh. I want to go back to verse 16. Pharaoh has HEARD what God had to say. But he's not listening. His pride is hardening his heart and keeping him from listening to God. what does this show us about humanity? It shows us how DEADLY our pride is.

You guys ever use noise cancelling headphones? These things became the means by which a lot of parents were able to work from home during the pandemic. 4 kids trying to do school from home every day...bout 10:30 am some argument



breaks out between kids because we've all got cabin fever...But do I hear it? Nope. I've got noise cancelling headphones. So, I just put on some Spotify chill study vibes playlist. And I'm good. But then it backfires. Because Courtney comes into the room and starts talking to me. And I'm looking at her. I see her mouth is moving. But I do not hear her. And if she sees me KEEP my headphones on, she starts saying things. And I can hear muffled sound, but I'm not listening and it's not registering anything.

PRIDE IS THE NOISE CANCELING HEADPHONES OF THE HEART. It's keeping the voice of God muffled in your life. You might hear something from him, but you aren't listening and the incredibly deceptive thing about pride - you don't know you are wearing the headphones.

Listen by the end of this series you are going to be like "Man, spence has talked about Pharaoh's pride a lot. Well, there is a reason. THE Bible talks about Pharaoh's pride a lot. Chapter after chapter in this account. The Lord keeps on bringing it up. Almost as if pride is something you need to hear a lot about because maybe you have trouble seeing it in yourself. Like if we just did a quick fly-by of it. Oh, btw pharaoh was prideful...don't be like him...you'd never hear it. Yet pride is muffling the voice of God in your life.

- Examples - Casual with sin. That one isn't that big of a deal. Do you see that ANYWHERE in scripture? God is

never casual with sin. That's your pride telling you that your sin is "little." That's your pride comparing your sin to that guy's sin. At least I'm not him. God doesn't compare your sin to others. That's all you.

- Another example: casual with his church. God calls it his bride. God gives weighty words about the importance of gathering for worship & sitting under the teaching of God's word. Of singing together & celebrating the gospel together. That there is great power in this weekly rhythm. Of serving one another, giving to the mission. And yet, you know in the states the average church member attends church 1.4 times a month. I know it's my professional job to be here. I get that. And ironically enough the people I'm saying this to are here. But I don't know if anyone else in your life is going to tell you to cherish his bride instead of your pride.

Last Question: How does this passage point to Jesus?

The plagues point to Jesus the Redeemer

See when Jesus shows up on the scene, he performs lots of miracles. Have you ever thought about what he was doing? He's mending creation. He's redeeming creation from sin &



restoring it to what it was meant to be. He doesn't do random acts of kindness. He doesn't do cool tricks. Watch this I'll fly. No, what he is doing is restoring creation to its intended order. He's making the blind see and the lame walk. It's the reversal of what God did in the plagues. **SHOWING YOU** that he is the one true God by giving you evidence he is indeed the God of creation. He is the one true God. And he is also merciful. And he does miracles to show you that if he can heal your sight, he can heal your soul.

This is what makes the gospel so amazing it's almost unbelievable. That the creator God **SHOULD** rightly judge his creation for rejecting him. And **YET** - he's also **SO** merciful that he doesn't rain death down on us. He doesn't wipe us off the face of the earth. **INSTEAD**, he sends the plague onto Christ. Who took the **FULL PAYMENT** for our sin? The plague of death. So that we sinners could be spared. **WHAT GRACE!** Turn to him today.