

SUNDAY STORIES

Parting Ways / Exodus 14:19-31/ Matthew 18:21-35

QUICK NOTES

When the Lord's Spirit passed over Egypt, the first born sons of Egypt died. In fear the Egyptians finally sent away the Hebrew slaves practically paying them to leave. When they are gone it doesn't take long for the Egyptians to want their servants back. In anger Pharaoh sent his troops to track down the fleeing Hebrews. God parts the water so the Hebrews can cross. As the Egyptians follow the waters return and drown them

PARTING WATERS

As the story goes, from the plagues to the moment Pharaoh tells the Hebrews to get the heck out of Dodge, there is always God hardening Pharaoh's heart against letting them go. As people read this story their ire is raised against God and indeed it looks as if God is making the problem worse. Innocent Egyptians are, indeed, affected by Pharaoh's hardened heart. Most of us think we would have kicked the Hebrews out at least by plague five or six. After losing all the first born children of his kingdom how can Pharaoh even want to go after these people to bring them back? A long time ago he feared they would overrun and overburden the Egyptians and he declared an edict that all newly born Hebrew sons would be killed. Now, when they have proven, through their God, how dangerous they are to have around, he wants to bring them back. His troops go after the fleeing Hebrews with a vengeance. We all know the famous scene; Moses stretches out his hand and the waters of the Sea separate so the Hebrews can cross safely. As the Egyptian soldiers begin to cross Moses puts down his hand and the waters flow back and Egyptians are thrown into the sea.

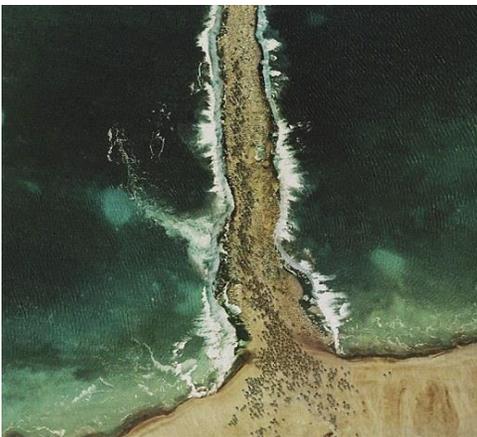
“A pain stabbed my heart, as it did every time I saw a girl I loved who was going the opposite direction in this too big-world” – Jack Kerouac

PARTING WAYS

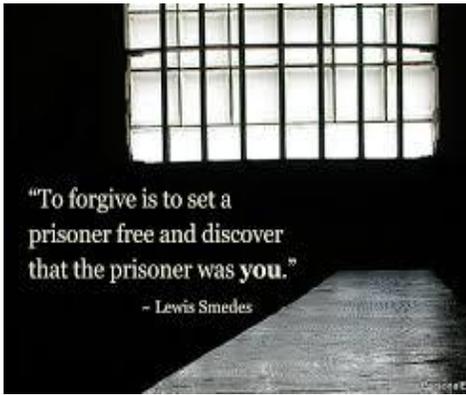
Q: What point is God trying to make in hardening Pharaoh's heart?

A: The relationship between Egypt and the Hebrews was first forged when Joseph saved Egypt. He became second to Pharaoh and for a long time the Hebrews were welcome in Egypt. Then came a Pharaoh who forgot that story and enslaved them. There have been many movies and operas made about the story of Moses and Pharaoh. Each explores an interesting idea. Moses was adopted by the Pharaoh who wanted the Hebrew first born children killed. Moses would have been raised with

Pharaoh's son who would also become Pharaoh. Some stories imagine sibling rivalry with this son, others imagine a close kinship. What these have in common is that there is a strong relationship of either hatred or love between these two men. It can be just as difficult to let go of those we hate as it is to let go of those we love and sometimes we don't know which is which. The more God had Pharaoh chasing Moses the more Moses understood the need to sever ties completely, thus forming a strong community that would follow only God.



James Dive recreates satellite images of the parting of the Red Sea.



LETTING GO

God offers everybody a chance at freedom, but it means giving all we are to God's plan for us. But most of us have relationships in our lives that consist of unfinished business. Amazingly this unfinished business often holds us back from seeking freedom from the things that can keep us enslaved. We hear it in the question that Peter asks, "If another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive?" One might wonder who is Peter feeling a grudge against, or maybe he's afraid he messes up so much there will be a point when he won't be forgiven. This grudge or worry keeps his faith from being where it needs to be, totally with Jesus. But aren't we all like that? Even if someone has apologized to us don't we still feel hurt? Don't we have a hard time forgiving ourselves for things we've done?

Contact Us

St. Paul's in Romeo

PO Box 148

11100 W. St. Clair (32 mile rd)

Romeo, MI 48095

586-752-3212

stpaulsromeo@comcast.net

www.stpaulsromeo.org

JESUS' PARABLE OF PAYING IT FORWARD

Jesus gives a description what God's kingdom is like. A king calls all the servants together that owe him a debt. We hear a servant asking for more time to pay the debt. The king forgives it completely. This same servant calls another servant for a debt owed him. Instead of reflecting the mercy of the king he has the man thrown in prison. Other servants are very upset about this. It's disturbing and disruptive to the community. The king angrily separates the mean-spirited servant from the rest of the community. He will never be thought of again. The rest of the community will continue forward with a sense of mercy and not taking mistakes others make toward them personally.

WHAT'S GOOD FOR COMMUNITY

We are the servants called to follow a king who forgave us our debts by giving his life for us. We must forgive those that are still in our heads trying to hold us back from freedom. And if we are being hurt by those in our own community we are supposed to forgive each other. We don't take it personally when someone gets upset with us. We don't take it personally when we disagree on something. We don't get angry if our idea got overlooked in favor of another. Instead we focus on the mercy and love God shows us and we pay it forward. We focus on what we all have in common with each other; a passion for our Lord, for our church, and desire to make a difference in the world. It's hard work. But if we can't forgive than we can't move in the direction God calls us. We have a choice in our relationships, to be continually pulled toward a life that is painful and full of death (Pharaoh) or a life that is not easy, but promises hope and freedom (Moses). We can't have both.

PRAYER

Lord you came into this world to forgive our debts and to show us how to live in the freedom of your love and mercy. Help us to forgive those who hurt us. Help us to let go. Help us to forgive ourselves. We ask this in the name of Christ who showed us how to forgive. Amen

Children's Section

SHARE THE STORY WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Here's a nice little 6 minute story of Moses to share with your children. Click the link below to get to the video.

<http://youtu.be/BEOMFjGFS7M>

Cut this Moses out:



Get some blue construction paper. If you don't have that white paper will do. Draw a line down the center of the paper from top to bottom (The long way). Fold the left and right edges towards the center lines and draw some nice calm waves on them. You can add fish stickers, or draw some fish.

Open the paper back up. On left and right side draw some waves that are high, from the fold to the edge. On the middle section (Where Moses is going to walk) you can color it brown for dirt. Add some rocks if you want.

When you're all done you can walk Moses through it. When he gets to the end close it up again. Moses and his people made it safely across.