Pass Through the Waters

Exodus 14:19-29 Kimby Young

Ephesians 2:4-10 June 22, 2025

Traveling Day Camp has been exploring the stories of Moses and the Exodus this week and how these experiences of so long ago relate to us today. First and foremost, they remind us of God’s continuing love and salvation. Today’s scripture with the story of the Exodus of slaves from Egypt was the story for Wednesday. I realized I have never preached on this story, though it is so pivotal to our faith story. This was the formative story of God’s people in our tradition. This escape from slavery by the hand of God, is the historical event to which the people of Israel look when talking about who they are. They are people who have been saved by God. God saved them. That is who they are. That is who we are as inheritors of that faith tradition. We are a people whom God saves.

We all know the story, probably best portrayed by Charlton Heston and Cecil B Demille in the great movie “The Ten Commandments.” Even though there are a few inaccuracies in the movie – who can forget that great wall of water held back high above the heads of the frightened people of God passing through on dry sand. It’s a fantastic image. It is a miraculous escape from terrible oppression by a frightened weak needy “chosen” people of God. The people don’t save themselves, nor do they deserve to be saved. Moses doesn’t save them. Their faith does not save them. God saves them. God and God alone saves God’s people. This has always been true. This always will be true. God alone saves us by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Israelites’ response to that salvation was to trust God. Of course, they failed time and again. But repeatedly they remembered what God had done for them and they promised to try to trust God. Further they tried to obey God and to deserve God’s love. Of course, here’s the catch – we cannot deserve God’s love. We can only receive God’s love and respond to God’s love in faithful living. We cannot deserve or earn our salvation. God’s grace is a gift freely given because of the love of God.

Throughout the Bible this event is remembered and referenced, when God reached down into the world and pulled a people up. Surely they would have died – crushed by the army of Pharoah chasing them, drowned in the swirling water of chaos. Death was certain until God intervened. That is one of the fundamental points of this story – God intervenes. God is a God who cares enough, who is involved enough, who is powerful enough to step into history and change the world. God saves. And God does it again and again throughout history, and even in our lives today. God cares. God touches our lives. God brings hope and life and joy. God saves because God loves.

Our salvation is about God, not about us. Our salvation is about who God is, not about our response, not about our faithfulness, not about us getting what we deserve, not about us at all. Yes, I know, it feels like it is about us, because we are the recipients. We receive God’s grace and bathe in God’s love. We are inspired by God’s salvation and we want to live lives of goodness and honor. But it is God who saves through the actions of Jesus Christ. God saves. We receive grace and rejoice in the new life given.

In the Christian tradition, baptism has become the symbol of that grace and salvation by God. We pass through the waters into new life in Christ. We are set free from slavery to sin and death. We are welcomed into the promised land of God’s realm. Like the salvation of Exodus, baptism is not about anything we deserve. It is all about God’s action in Jesus Christ. Jesus receives us. We don’t earn or even deserve our salvation. It is gift of our loving and generous God. God saves us. All glory is given to God. In our tradition we baptize babies as well as adults to remind ourselves that salvation is God’s work, not our own. It is not our choice. It is God’s choice. We are helpless and needy as infants. Just as a baby has not done anything to deserve the love given, so we can do nothing to deserve God’s love. God loves us and God saves us because that is who God is. God loves us and saves us by grace alone. We belong to God. And to God be all glory.

God’s grace is not conditional. It can not be earned. It is not deserved. However, our response to God’s grace can carry certain responsibility. Like the Israelites we learn to trust God. Like the people of God for generations, we promise to serve God. Because of God’s grace for us, we want to live lives worthy of God. We want to do the right thing. We want to please God. We try to follow Jesus in the way of love. Of course, we sometimes fail. But we are forgiven by God and freed to try again. All of our faith life is about the dance of grace and response. God loves us. That gives us the courage, inspiration, and desire to respond. We pass through the waters and we are saved. We want to live a new life pleasing to God in this freedom God has given us. Life goes on. And grace abounds.

That’s what the rest of the Traveling Day Camp week was about – learning to trust God and to follow Jesus. Because we are saved, because we are loved, we want to please God. We want to help others. We want to share God’s goodness. So we come to Traveling Day Camp, or Bible Study. We gather as Masons to help the community. We worship. We pray. We offer our gifts and talents. We find ways to serve God and care for other people. We find ways to show God’s love. Because we have passed through the waters, we want to help others through their difficulties. Because we are saved, we want to live faithfully. We are grateful for God’s amazing grace.

I’ve been talking a lot today. And I know that sometimes I get trapped in theology and you can get lost in thought. So I thought I would close today with a practical exercise. I’m going to invite you to imagine yourself beside the Red Sea. The Israelites felt trapped – slavery on one side and death on the other, an army on one side and a flood on the other. I invite you to think about all that traps you, all that pressures you, all that overwhelms you. Make a list if you want to, on the paper in the bulletin. Make a list of your burdens, your fears, even your failures and your problems. Make a list and offer those worries to God. Offer anything that bothers you to God. God will take it. The scripture says God moved a pillar of fire and cloud between the people and everything they feared. Fire and cloud are symbols of the Spirit of God. So imagine the Spirit of God – a fire, a cloud, a breath from heaven. Imagine the Spirit of God taking all those burdens away. Imagine God’s grace pouring over you and giving you life. Turn over your paper if you have made a list. Give that list to God. Now imagine walking through God’s protective grace and into a future God has promised. Enter that promised land – safe and dry, loved and blessed, powerful and purposeful. Imagine where Jesus Christ is leading you into a land of possibility. If you are up to it, write a response to God’s grace. Where will you follow Jesus in the days ahead? How will you serve God faithfully? If you are not ready to make that commitment yet, just bask in the joy of God’s grace overflowing. Know that you are saved. Know that you are loved. Know that you belong to God in Jesus Christ our Savior. And rejoice. Give thanks. And live to the glory of God.