

ST. ANDREW'S, BLACKROCK & BRAY - 18TH JULY 2021

OUT OF & INTO; MOSES AND THE PASSOVER (EXODUS 12)

"Welcome to our 'Church at Home' transcript for the 18th July 2021.

Today we are continuing our series called 'Out Of & Into' looking at the life of Moses in the Bible. Today's sermon about the Passover comes from Exodus 12, and points us to the new life we can have through the death of Jesus.

"I will be off for most of August, so I will be taking a break from sending out these transcripts for the rest of the summer." - Rev. Andrew Gill

Call to Worship – Psalm 89:1-2, 52

I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, for ever;

with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

I declare that your steadfast love is established for ever;

your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

Blessed be the Lord for ever. Amen and Amen.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God,

your Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence. Give us pure hearts and constant wills to worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Reading - Exodus 6:28-7:13

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of

people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

Sermon - 'Moses and the Passover'

Have you ever had the opportunity in life to have a fresh start? Perhaps you have moved somewhere and it meant a new beginning. Years ago when I was involved in youth work, I had a nickname. The teens would call me 'Fishy', because my second name is Gill. Everywhere I went people kept on calling me by my nickname, and even though I liked it initially, after a while I started to get a little bit tired of it but I could just never get rid of it. It was a name that was stuck to me. But when I went to work up in a church in Northern Ireland, nobody knew me, and it was a new beginning. I had a fresh start and the nickname was finally gone.

We are continuing our series that we started a few weeks ago, looking at the life of Moses, called 'Out of and into'. Today we are coming to the central point of that story and looking at the story of the Passover, when God

delivers the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, which for them, is a new beginning. It is a fresh start because up to this point they were called pharaoh slaves, but now they will be called God's beloved, treasured, and holy people. The passover is one of the most significant events in the whole Bible. It is the defining moment for the Jewish people, who still celebrate this feast annually. And ultimately it points us to the freedom that we can have in Christ, who came to rescue us out of sins and into eternal life. This story is about a new beginning for the Hebrew people, and I pray that today it might be a new beginning for you too.

We are going to look at this story from three different perspectives, by visiting three different houses. The first house we are going to go to is a palace, and we are going to go through the doorway, and we see a king sitting on his throne. Next to him is the prophet Moses, who says to him, *"This is what the Lord says, 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die... There will be a loud wailing throughout Egypt, far worse than there ever has been, or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal.' Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. All those officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, 'Go, you and all the people who follow you!' After that I will leave."* (Exodus 11:4-8)

But pharaoh refused to listen because his heart was hard, and he would not let the Israelites go. In verse 8 it says that Moses left 'hot with anger', not just because he was not being listened to, but because he knew the suffering that was going to come because of Pharaoh's stubbornness. There had been nine other plagues before this, nine other times when Moses's warnings came to be true. But pharaoh believed that not only was he a king, but that he was a God, and out of pure pride and hubris he kept on saying no. But then, that night, he woke from his sleep with a loud sound of wailing. His son, the prince, was dead. As was the oldest son of each of his officials, and the oldest son of his servants, even the firstborn from among the

livestock died. There was not a house in Egypt without a death. So pharaoh called Moses and Aaron, and not only now does he give them permission to go, but he commands them to go. He tells them to get out of Egypt now! God had rescued his people! He had answered their prayers, and with mighty miracles he released them out of their oppression.

But that is not the full story, there is something more to discover in this chapter of the Bible, so we need to go to our next house. Let us rewind to the beginning of that night again to see how different it was for the Israelites. This house is far from the palace, and as we go through the door and we notice that there is blood on the top and sides of the frame. Inside we see a family sharing a meal. Lamb is on the menu, the best of their flock, it was roasted whole, sharing some with their neighbour so that none would be left over. They are eating in haste. The bread is made without yeast because there was no time to let it rise. Their bags are packed and their coats are on. They are ready to leave. Ready to be rescued by this final and terrible plague.

Now the Israelites had endured the plagues of frogs and gnats with the Egyptians. But God spared them from the plague of flies, and their sheep and cattle were kept safe when a plague of disease struck the Egyptians livestock. While the rest of Egypt was in darkness for three days the Israelites lived in light. So clearly God knows where the Egyptians live, and where the Israelites live. So why the lamb? Why the need to put blood on the door? It is because this final plague is different, it is not just punishment on the Egyptians for their cruelty, this is God's judgment coming on sin. And before God the Israelites were just as guilty of sin as the Egyptians. The default mode of all our hearts is to behave like pharaoh, we have hard hearts towards God, we say no to his commands, we refuse to listen to his words, and we try to set up ourselves as king and god of our own life. That's what the Bible calls sin, and the Bible is very clear that the judgment on sin is death. So when God's judgment came to visit Egypt that night it meant that

there had to be a death in every house. God passed over the Israelites not because they were Israelites, but because there had already been a death in that house. A sacrifice had been made, and a substitute had been given. The lamb had died in the place of the son.

That evening the family walked into that house as slaves but they walked out as free people. But for the eldest son, it had extra significance, because he walked into that house as one destined to die, but he walked out, under the blood, as somebody who had been redeemed and given new life. It can be the same for you today. Perhaps you came to church as a slave to sin, deserving the judgment of death. But you can walk out today receiving redemption and the forgiveness of sins! Today can be a fresh start and a new beginning with God.

So often, what we see in the Old Testament, is just a foreshadow of something even greater that is to come. And that is the case here, so let us go to our final house. We are going to fast forward in time to about 1,500 years after the events of the first passover. We are going to go through the door of a house in Jerusalem, and up the stairs where we see Jesus and his disciples celebrating the Passover meal, just as Moses commanded.

Jesus takes the bread, he gives thanks, he breaks it, and gives it to his disciples. Then he says to them, *“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”* (Luke 22:19) The same way after supper, he took the cup and said, *“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you”* (Luke 22:20) Jesus was making a connection between the Passover and what was about to happen. After that meal he was betrayed, arrested, beaten, and killed. And after his resurrection, the disciples put all this together and they understood what Jesus’ death on the cross was *for us*. Jesus sacrificed himself to forgive us, and he substituted himself to redeem us. Christ is our perfect passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). He died in our place, he was punished for our sin so that God's judgment

would pass over us. By his blood we can be set free, and the same joy that was experienced by the Israelites that day as they walked out of their slavery can be experienced by us today in abundance!

We have visited three house, and now I must ask the question, 'What about you house?' Or more particularly, 'What about your heart?' Will you have a heart of pharaoh, that's saying no, and refusing to listen. Or will you choose to have a heart of faith, and put your trust in the blood of Jesus.

During the week, when I was sitting in the garden hand writing my notes for preaching, my pen started to run out of ink and I ended up making a mess on the page. So I got a clean blank piece of paper and started over again. Has sin has made a mess of your life? If you page is full of regrets, mistakes, and failures, if you know that you have done some things that you should not have done, or said some things that have hurt others, then ask Jesus to give you a clean blank page. In his grace he offers us a fresh start today. Through faith in the cross today can be a new beginning with God. The blood of Christ can rescue us out of the judgment of sin and bring us into the joy of salvation, it can deliver us out of the fear of death and bring into eternal life!

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank you, that before the creation of the world, you chose Jesus Christ to be our passover lamb. Thank you that with his precious blood I can be redeemed and set free.

Lord I confess that I have sinned against you. I have acted with pride, hardened my heart to your word, and said 'no' to your commands. Please forgive me.

Today I choose to put my faith in the blood of Jesus. Send your Holy Spirit into my heart, so that today may be for me a day of new beginnings. Amen