**Waiting For The Lord: To Grant Deliverance**

**Exodus 14:10-15:1**

(Heb. 11:23-29 & Matt. 14:22-34)

[adapted from Travis Kleinschmidt]

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As you know, our mid-week Lenten sermons are looking at the Old Testament readings from the Easter Vigil. Our over-arching theme is: Waiting for the Lord: Joining the Old Testament Saints in Vigil. Today, we are Waiting for the Lord: To Grant Deliverance.

Imagine being an Israelite in the events unfolding in our Old Testament lesson? All the people are now able to see Pharaoh’s army – perhaps the greatest army of the day. You were slaves in Egypt, you watched all ten plagues – especially the plague on the firstborn. Now there is the Red Sea on one side, and Pharaoh’s army on the other.

You are hemmed in behind and before. As God’s people, you are looking back at the army on your heels, waiting for the Lord to grant deliverance.

Dear friends, the Israelites had escaped death by putting the blood of the Passover lamb on their doors. The first-born of the Egyptians died, including even the firstborn of Pharaoh’s family. But God’s people were spared by the blood of the lamb smeared upon the doorposts and lintels of their homes.

But now it seems like death is unrelenting and will not give up so easily. There is the most powerful army in the world. The people are so dismayed by this, they are ready to give up. In their terror, They say to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”

Moses could have replied, “Umm, no, that is not what you said.” But their eyes see, and their reason – caught up in their worldly vision – immediately jumps to a conclusion. They are confronting what appears to them to be certain death. They wish to be comfortable, avoiding what they see as a painful death. They would trade the death that is before them, by the might of Pharaoh’s army and the sharpness of the sword – for a life of slavery.

What the Israelites are truly doing is questioning the wisdom of God and putting the blame on Him and on Moses for what appears to their fleshly reason, as an inescapably foregone conclusion of death by the sword. This is not the type of death they want.

So, to forestall what appears inevitable, they seek to turn back the clock and go back to Egypt and a comfortable life there.

But that is a lie. They were not living a comfortable life; it was slavery. Slavery from which they were crying out to the Lord to free them – for years.

The Lord provided life and freedom, but they don’t even realize it. They despair of their new situation. And while it may not seem like it, despair is a type of sin. Despair is the absence of hope – it is failure to fully trust God.

The book of Hebrews defines faith this way, “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for.” Dearly beloved of God, if nothing is hoped for then, there is no faith. The people despair for they have no hope; they have no faith that God will save them from the death that seems immanent.

We might ask, were they blind to the ten plagues God had inflicted upon Egypt. Had they been oblivious to the plagues that fell upon Egypt while the Israelites in Goshen were set apart by God and spared? Had they not heard the mournful cries of those who had lost their first-borns as the Lord passed through the land? They are now free from slavery on their way to the promised land. Even as they despair with no hope, the Lord is providing life and freedom.

Freedom from death has been promised to you as well. The Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross to purchase your freedom from your slavery to sin, and He rose from the grave to give you life.

To you the promise is made and delivered, but we have this Israelite in us. We look longingly back at our sin and death. We like the feel of the chains around our ankles, wrists, and neck. The slavery of death is enticing. We find joy in our sins, for in that moment, they feel good. We question if the Lord’s plan is really best for us.

You stand at the threshold of your sins being gone and you find yourself denying that the way of Jesus is actually for your good. Your sins seem so comfortable. You do not see a way to cross that sea. Slavery to sin seems more appealing than repentance, fully trusting God.

How shortsighted you can be. You want to take things into your own hands and make your death and your sins seem like the only route to go. If your sins are your choice, then maybe that will make them a tolerable choice.

Or maybe you are on the flip side – you despair of the situation that you find yourself in. There just does not seem to be a way out of your sins. You want to do better, but your efforts continue to fail time after time.

You find yourself trapped by the sins you have committed, and those sins bring more sins upon you – or, you continue to suffer the devastating consequences of past sins.

Moses wasn’t just speaking to the Israelites before the Red Sea that day, He was speaking to you. “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today.”

Even as death stands at your door, the Lord fights for you. Even when despair has tightened his grip upon you, the Lord fights for you. Stand and look at how the Lord will deliver you. Jesus, God’s Christ is victorious.

You are His child and you don’t belong in the slavery of sin and despair. God did not create you with the intention that you would die. His intention for you is that you live in freedom…the freedom of Christ. It is in Christ that you are freed from your slavery to sin, free from the loss of hope.

Just as the Lord led the people through the water on dry ground, thereby destroying Pharaoh and his army as they pursued them; the Lord will have victory over your enemies.

Death died when the chariots were destroyed.

Death died when the horsemen drowned.

Despair was vanquished when hope was put in the Lord who delivers.

Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord.

He delivers you from your sin, from your slavery to it, from death, from despair.

There may be times that these things are close and crouching at the door; but when the final waters crash back down; you will ever be in the Lord’s merciful care.

Water – the water of baptism. Water is always a messenger of hope and joy – it is a reminder of the Lord’s baptismal deliverance of us. Our daily baptismal life is contrition and repentance, drowning the old sinful flesh, that it might be raised cleansed and holy, to live a new life.

And today you wait…but you wait as those who have hope…you know the full assurance that Jesus has come and has delivered you, taking your sin and death into His own flesh.

You stand, you watch, you wait…but you know Jesus will deliver you.

Of that, you have no doubt for the greatest deliverance Jesus has already given is by His death on the cross and His glorious resurrection.

Sin, death, and despair are swallowed up in the Red Sea of Jesus’ blood, they have no power over you.

All we wait for now – with all God’s saints – is the for deliverance from this life to the resurrected and glorified life that is to be ours on the last day. We wait for the Lord to grant that deliverance. In the name of Jesus. Amen.