

EVENSONG SERMON 13 MARCH 2016 (Exodus 5 & 1 Corinthians 6) JEN LUM

Let me pray before I start:

Heavenly Father, open our ears, hearts, and minds to listen to your word and to follow your ways.

Amen.

Now most, if not all of us, are very familiar with the Exodus story.

We heard in our Old Testament reading this afternoon that the Israelites had become slaves of the Egyptians and that Moses has been sent by God to meet with Pharaoh.

Moses tells Pharaoh: "Our God says: let my people go so that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness."

Pharaoh's response was not unexpected.

He says to Moses: Who is this God that I should obey him and let Israel go?

Pharaoh was angry that Moses was stopping the Israelites from their task of making bricks.

Previously the Israelites had been given straw to add to the mixture to strengthen the bricks they made.

Pharaoh now orders his slave masters to stop giving straw to the Israelites.

Instead the Israelites are from now on to gather straw for themselves.

Pharaoh does not reduce the number of bricks that they have to make even though the Israelites now have to spend additional time gathering the straw to make the bricks.

The Israelites complained to Pharaoh but to no avail.

The Israelites then went to Moses and complained that he had made their burden heavier.

Moses returns to the Lord and asks why the Lord has caused more trouble for his people.

The Old Testament reading ends with Moses accusing God of not delivering his people.

This afternoon, I want to consider Pharaoh's question.

He asks Moses - who is this God, that I should obey him, and let Israel go?

So, who is this God that Pharaoh asks Moses about?

Well, he is the God who created the heavens and the earth and every living thing in this world, including us.

He is the God who rescues his people from slavery in Egypt after inflicting on the Egyptians plagues of frogs, locusts and flies, rivers of blood, darkness and hail, and who killed their livestock and their firstborn.

He is the God who saved the firstborn of the Israelites and who led them to the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey.

In this day and age, many people in Australia consider a belief in God as antiquated and misguided.

How many times have atheists and skeptics been permitted to pour derision on Christians on shows like the ABC's Q & A?

Well known atheists, like Stephen Hawking and Christopher Hitchens, and our own Peter FitzSimons and Catherine Deveny, are allowed to rail against Christianity with impunity.

God is considered to be a figment of the imagination, a fairy tale, somewhat like the tooth fairy.

Christians are accused of being people who can't stand on their own two feet and who need Christianity as a crutch.

We even had a Prime Minister who did not believe in God.

I want to ask some questions of us here today:

Do we believe in this God who spoke to Moses?

Do we know this God?

Does he know us in return?

How do we get to know him?

Do we do what God wants us to do?

These questions are for each and every one of us today and every day.

We will all go through periods of uncertainty.

Perhaps a loved one dies unexpectedly.

Perhaps a marriage fails.

Perhaps a job is lost.

Do we wonder whether God is listening?

Do we wonder whether God cares?

Well I am here to tell you that there is a God and that he is listening and that he does care.

He knows and loves each and every one of us.

The Israelites believed in God.

They knew God because their prophets had told them about him.

They saw with their own eyes, God's miraculous signs and wonders.

They knew that God kept his promises and that he does deliver his people.

God parted the waters of the Red Sea and Moses led them through.

The Egyptians following them were drowned when the seas returned to their place.

However, we know that the Exodus story is also about un-belief.

The Israelites don't believe God when he told them that they would be able to defeat the people already in the Promised Land.

They are too frightened to go into the land and so they spend the next 40 years wandering in the wilderness.

But God cared for them and provided manna for them to eat so they would not go hungry.

However, despite all this, they still did not obey God and they did not follow in his ways.

They worshipped false idols – remember the golden calf they made while Moses was with God on top of the mountain?

They did not trust God to protect and provide for them.

They did not give God the glory he deserved.

Eventually, after many failures to honour God as the one true God the Israelites were taken into exile first by the Assyrians and then by the Babylonians.

Are we too, like the Israelites?

Do we profess to believe in God but then don't trust him to provide for us?

Do we follow the false Gods of money and status?

Do we love created things better than our Creator?

Do we do what we want and fail to follow God's ways?

Our New Testament reading reminds us not to act unjustly, not to cheat, not to be greedy, not to be drunkards, not to be sexually immoral.

Paul reminds us that the unrighteous will not inherit God's Kingdom.

He reminds us that as Christians we are washed clean, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

He reminds us that God will raise us up by his power.

He reminds us that we have been brought with a price.

The ransom was paid for us by our God who loved us so much that he gave his only beloved son Jesus to die on the cross on our behalf.

So, do not allow doubts to shake our faith in God, continue to believe in him and he will rescue us from slavery to sin.

We will be raised to everlasting life with our loving God who does care and who does listen.

Let me pray:

Heavenly Father.

Thank you for your love and care.

Thank you for the sacrifice of your son.

Help us to walk in your ways and live lives worthy of you.

May all that we are and all that we do be to your praise, and glory.

Amen