

Title: "Living Faith: Moses and the Passover"

Text: Hebrews 11:28; Exodus 12:1-14

We are continuing in our series on "Living Faith in 3D,"
-and in this second half of the series we are using Hebrews
11 as an outline of what living faith looks like in the lives
of a whole variety of people in the Bible.

We have looked at Abel and Enoch, Noah, Abraham and
Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph and now Moses.

-And the writer to the Hebrews has directed our attention to
various phases of Moses' life:

-His birth, his young adulthood, his early attempts to save
people.

-Today the writer to the Hebrews has us skip ahead in Moses'
life to that crucial moment, which is ever after known as
Passover.

We read the story from Exodus 12 earlier in the service.

-The writer to the Hebrews sums up the story like this:

*"By faith, Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood,
so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the
firstborn of Israel."*

Let's pray.

There is a great movie that was in the theatres over the past
two months called, "Darkest Hour."

-It's about Winston Churchill at the beginning of WWII.

-He had just become Prime Minister of England as Adolf
Hitler's forces were "blitz-krieging" their way all over
Europe.

As the movie begins, the Nazi's are storming across France.

-They have trapped hundreds of thousands of British and
Allied soldiers on the beach at Dunkirk on the coast of
France.

-They are threatening to not only destroy those troops,

-but to then cross the Channel and invade England itself.

-It is England's "darkest hour."

-And it is Churchill's "darkest hour," as he must decide:

- whether to seek a compromising peace treaty with Hitler,
- or make a stand against Hitler and fight for the ideals of liberty and freedom.

It's a great movie, but for today, I particularly like the title:
"Darkest Hour."

- Do you know that God is no stranger to "darkest hours?"
- The fact is, he often shows up right in the midst of them.
 - And not only that, God regularly uses "darkest hours" in our lives for His purposes, to show forth His goodness and glory!

It happens all the time, in our lives...and in the Bible.

- Today, the writer to the Hebrews says quite simply, *"By faith, Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel."*

That sentence refers back to one of the "darkest hours" in the whole Bible.

- It was a "darkest hour" for the nation of Egypt, and a "darkest hour" for Moses and the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Egyptians had enslaved the people of God for many years.

- They had put them to forced labor.
- They had been putting all of the boy babies born to the Hebrews to death in order to limit the Hebrew population.
- The Israelites had been whipped, and beaten, and treated like cattle.

But in the midst of that "darkest hour" for them as a people, God had showed up for them.

- He had sent Moses to confront the Pharaoh and set them free.
- However, if you know the story, it wasn't an easy process.
 - Things got worse for God's people before they got better!
 - Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses.
 - Pharaoh made the people's slavery worse.
 - The darkness got darker!

And so God sent 10 plagues upon the nation of Egypt.

- Each plague was designed to show the LORD God's supremacy over all of the gods of Egypt.
- Each plague was also an invitation to Pharaoh and the people of Egypt to put their trust in the LORD God,
 - and respond to Him in repentance and faith.

And though some of the people of Egypt did just that in response to see the power of God in the plagues,

- Pharaoh, and his leaders, and the majority of the Egyptians did not.

And so the plagues got progressively worse as they went.

- The destructive consequences of each plague were more severe as they went.
- The 9th plague was a plague of literal darkness.
 - The Bible says it was a darkness "that could be felt."
 - It was so thick a darkness, that for 3 days no one could see anyone else or even leave their homes because they couldn't see where to go.

But it was really the 10th plague that brought Egypt to its truly "darkest hour."

With the 10th plague God put to death the firstborn male child of every household in Egypt.

- As Pharaoh had been killing all of the male babies born to the Hebrews,
 - God now turned the tables and brought death to every first born son of every family,
 - from Pharaoh's own family down to the family of the lowest Egyptian servants.

It was this final plague that brought Egypt to its knees in grief.

- It was a 'darkest hour' that was even deeper and darker than the literal darkness of the 9th plague.

Pharaoh finally let the Israelite people go.

But think about what this darkest hour in Egypt looked like for the Israelites, too.

God told Moses that death was coming to the firstborn sons of every family in Egypt.

- But God told Moses that the Israelites would be spared if each family would kill a male lamb as a substitute for their first born sons.

Each family was to take a one year old male lamb without defect,

- and slaughter it at twilight on the 14th day of the month.
- They were then to take the blood of the slaughtered lamb and paint it on the sides and tops of the outside door frames of their houses.

This blood on the door frames would be a sign to the angel of death that a substitutionary death had been paid by that household,

- and the angel of death would Passover the house and leave the firstborn sons alone.

Each family was then to roast the rest of the slaughtered lamb, and eat the meat of it for their evening meal,

- along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.
- And they were to eat the meal with their coats on, and their shoes tied, and their bags packed.

For God told them that this final plague would cause Pharaoh to let them go,

- and they needed to be ready to flee at a moment's notice.

My friends, the ultimate liberation from bondage to slavery in Egypt was a wonderful and amazing miracle from God for these people.

- But the process of how that miracle came about was a journey right in and through a "darkest hour."

The night of the first Passover was not a night of celebration and joy for the Israelites.

- It was a night of death and darkness all around them.
- There was weeping and moaning in every house in Egypt.
- There was blood being painted onto the doorposts of their homes.
- That's a disgusting thing to do when you think about it!

It was a night of fear and trembling.

-A night of bitter herbs.

-A night of fleeing off into the darkness and out into the wilderness,

-leaving every thing you had known as home behind.

For the Israelites, their “darkest hour” of slavery was over,

-but it was only by discovering that God had come to meet them right in the midst of the darkness.

-It was only by discovering that God could use the darkness of death itself to deliver them from death and darkness.

My friends, this is what God does in “darkest hours.”

-He doesn't so much deliver us from the darkness, as He delivers us through the darkness.

Jesus' death on the cross is the ultimate display of this.

-The only reason that we call “Good Friday” GOOD, is because God showed Himself to be present with Jesus in His “darkest hour.”

-But Jesus wasn't spared the darkness or the death.

-He was called to walk knowingly and willingly right into that valley of the shadow of death.

He was called to take upon Himself all of the sin, and the judgment of death that our human sin had necessitated.

And so He did. Jesus died on that cross.

-And to all the world, even to his own disciples, that death on the cross looked like a defeat.

-It looked like a failure.

-It looked like death and darkness had triumphed.

But right there in the midst of the darkest hour, God was actually using the darkness to perform His greatest act of redeeming light.

-God turned that seeming defeat into His great victory over sin and hell and death itself.

-God raised Jesus from the dead, and the cross now stands as a symbol of life and light, not of death and darkness.

This is what God can do with our darkest hours.

At Dunkirk for Churchill it looked like this:

- Every serviceable boat along the English coast, some naval vessels, but mostly hundreds of civilian fishing boats and charter boats, manned by patriotic Englishmen,
- started sailing back and forth across the English channel to help evacuate the stranded and hopeless Allied soldiers.

And they kept at it, sailing back and forth over eight days amidst the bombs of Nazi planes flying over head.

- On the first day they evacuated 7669 allied soldiers.
- But more boats joined the action and by the end of eight days, over 800 boats had been volunteered and together had evacuated and saved 338,226 soldiers.

The called it the Mosquito Armada.

- 800 little boats sailing back and forth, back and forth to rescue hundreds of thousands of trapped soldiers.
- It is one of the most amazing stories of faith and hope and love and bravery the world has ever known.

I believe God was right smack in the middle of it, making himself known to soldiers and sailors and politicians and Prime Ministers,

- who were all praying like crazy for deliverance from death and darkness.
- Winston Churchill saw God answer his prayers in miraculous fashion in his "darkest hour."
- He wasn't spared the darkness of that week, but experienced God leading him and his nation and all of Europe through the midst of it.

What have been your "darkest hours?"

- Looking back on them, can you now say that as painful as they were, God did use those times for your good and for His glory?
- Were they times in which you called on His name like never before,
- and discovered that He was actually there?
- Were they times, when in being brought to the end of yourself you discovered that wasn't such a bad thing?
- That in fact, being brought to the end of yourself, you discovered that you could lean on God, and lean on others, and they were there for you?

-And perhaps you discovered a deeper sense of humility, and thankfulness, and compassion for others in their pain.

For some of us, like me, it was in darkest hours, that we faced our own sinfulness, and got on our knees and asked forgiveness.

-And then discovered the gospel, that in Christ, God really has forgiven our sins.

My friends, it is in darkest hours that God regularly shows up for us.

-Or maybe it is simply that when the dark gets darker, his light gets lighter and we can see it for the first time.

But the Bible, and story of our lives, and the experiences of history again and again,

-is a story of how God uses darkness and even death experiences for His greater purposes of light and life.

With Moses and the Israelites, with Jesus and all his disciples, with Winston Churchill and so many others,

-let's give thanks to the God who in the valley of the shadow of death is there for us.

-His goodness and mercy follow us; He never leaves us nor forsakes us.

-He delivers us from evil, for His is the power and the glory forever and ever, amen.

Let's join in praying the Lord's Prayer together.