

Title: "A Living Faith: Moses at the Red Sea"

Text: Hebrews 11:29; Exodus 14:5-31

We are continuing in our series on "Living Faith in 3D,"
-and 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 are currently spending some time on the life of Moses.
-The writer to the Hebrews points out multiple examples of what living faith looked like in various phases of Moses' life.
-Today we come to that dramatic moment in Moses' life at the Red Sea.

The writer to the Hebrews sums it up in one sentence saying, "By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land, but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned."

Earlier in the service today we read the first part of this story from Exodus 14,
-where Pharaoh changes his mind about letting the people of Israel go free.
-He sets out with hundreds of chariots to chase them down and drag them back.
-Let's listen now to the rest of the story of what happens in Exodus 14:16-31.

I want to look at this story with you today in terms of the rather remarkable contrasts it presents us with.
-It's these contrasts that highlight the nature of faith, and what a "living faith" looked like for Moses and the people of God.

1. First is the contrast in verses 5-9 between Pharaoh's army and the people of God.

It's the contrast between the "strong" and the "weak,"
-the "fast" and the "slow."

Pharaoh is the king of the most powerful nation on earth at the time, and he has an entire army at his disposal.

-And that army has chariots, and horses, and weapons, and they can move swiftly to the attack.

-They are powerful as the world understands power.

Moses, on the other hand, the guy who is leading the people of God,

-he has been a shepherd of sheep for the past 40 years.

-He has a wooden staff that he carries.

-That long stick is the extent of his weaponry.

And the people of God have been slaves in Egypt for the past many years.

-Now there are a lot of them, so they have some significant numbers of people,

-but they are all on foot.

-And there are men, women, and children, old and young.

They have no weapons, no chariots, no horses.

They are slow moving, and pretty disorganized at this early stage of the Exodus.

They have just left their homes in Egypt.

They have no real idea where they are going.

They have walked a long distance in the past few days,

-and now they have come up against the Red Sea and can't go any further.

They are wondering if Moses knows what he is doing and where they are going.

And then they see the dust cloud in the distance, and they hear the thunder of horses charging toward them.

The strength of Pharaoh's army coming after them;

-and their weakness and helplessness in the face of that powerful army is the first contrast I want to highlight today.

2. And it leads us to the second contrast: the contrast in verses 10-14

-between Moses at this point in the story, and the people of God.

-It's the contrast between faith and fear.

- The people of God are rightly scared to death as Pharaoh's army comes charging at them.
- And they moan and groan and wonder why in the world they ever left Egypt to follow Moses out into the wilderness in the first place.

That's just how any of us would have felt in their place.

But Moses has been in this position many times by this point in the story.

- He has stood before the power of Pharaoh with nothing but the shepherd's staff in his hand quite a few times over the past few months of his life.
- And he has seen God come through for him every time.

And so, amazingly enough, Moses stands firm and speaks to the people, and says,

"Don't be afraid. For you will see the salvation of God, which he will work for you today. Those Egyptians you see now, you will never see again. YHWH will fight for you, and all you have to do is be quiet and watch the show."

Do you see the contrast between Moses and the people of God?

- Moses is learning to trust God, and the people of God are still living in fear.
- It's not that Moses has no fear, verse 15 tells us that Moses is crying out to God the whole time!
- He is praying constantly, "God, you better do something quickly! Pharaoh is coming on strong here!"

But Moses is calling on God! And he is trusting that God will come through.

- And we see this 'living faith' growing in him as he stands between the powerful army of Pharaoh
- and the weak and naturally frightened people of God.

On a human level Moses sees the impossibility of the situation he finds himself in.

- But he has learned that with God as a part of the equation of his life, nothing is impossible.

-He has learned not to lean on human logic alone, but to trust in the power of God to transform seemingly impossible situations.

So Moses reassures the people that God is going to fight on their behalf.

-I love it when he tells them in verse 14, that they need “only to be still.”

-How many times has God spoken those same words to me over the years?

“Paul, be still and know that I am God. Paul, be still and wait patiently for me. Paul, just be still and watch what I will do.”

It's an funny thing, but a part of cultivating a “living faith,” is learning to be still.

3. Which leads us to the third contrast I want you to notice:
-it's the contrast in verses 19-20 between light and darkness.

In verse 19, we are told that the Angel of the Lord had been going before this great multitude of people,
-and leading them with a visible pillar of cloud.

But when Moses calls on God, and God sets out to act,
-the first thing God does is He moves from in front of them, and goes all the way to the rear of them.

And that pillar of cloud, which is the very presence of God with them,

-sets up a great fog between the Egyptians and the people of God.

-And the cloud blocks out any light from sun or moon or stars on the Egyptian side

-so that Pharaoh and his army are cast into darkness.

And yet, on the other side of the cloud where Moses and the people of God are, there is light...a pillar of fire all night long.

-God's glory lights up the night for the Hebrew people.

-But He enshrouds the Egyptians in darkness.

And God himself is like a wall between the two peoples.
-And it is the powerful Egyptian army that starts to be afraid in the darkness.
-And it is the weak people of God who start to take courage.

4. And you know the story, the next great contrast is the one between land and sea.
-All night long as the people are being still, maybe even going to sleep,
-God sends a strong East wind that drives back the sea.

And the next morning when the people awake,
-God invites them to simply walk through the sea on dry land.
-That's all they needed to do. Just walk through.

But in contrast, when in the morning dawned and the cloud lifted off the Egyptians
-they went charging after the Israelites on their chariots
-and the sea came crashing down upon them.

What was dry land for the people of God becomes very wet sea for the Egyptians,
-and Pharaoh's elite force of charioteers was destroyed.

Do you see how the glory of God is displayed in all the contrasts of this story?
-And it is those very contrasts that cause the people of God to discover who God is and what He is like.
-And it is those contrasts that caused them to grow in faith,
a. learning that though they were weak, their amazing God was strong.
b. learning that though they were afraid, God was faithful to deliver.
c. learning that when all seemed dark and dangerous, God would be their light, and would have their back,
-and would protect them.
d. learning that when obstacles were in their way, even an obstacle as impenetrable as the sea itself,
-God could make a way ahead for them.

My friends, I share all of this with you today,
-because we need to learn to pay attention to the contrasts
in our own lives.

We need to pay attention to those places in our own lives
where we feel weak, and slow.
-Those places where we feel afraid,
-Those places where we feel inadequate to face the
difficulties in front of us.

We need to look at those places in our lives where we find
ourselves moaning and groaning
-and wishing for the good old days when we felt more
secure.

Those are the very places where God wants us to call on his
name and discover who He is for us.
Those are the very places where the contrast between our
weakness and his strength can be made real for us.
Those are the places where living faith is cultivated and can
grow.

But we need to pay attention to those places in our lives,
-and in those places we need to learn like Moses to call on
his name.

Then we learn to be still, and watch for what He will do.
-God delights to make His strength known to us in our
weakness.
-He delights to show us that His grace is sufficient for us.

And he also delights, that when His people discover His
strength in their weakness,
-that they respond to Him with thanksgiving and praise.
-That's what chapter 15 is in the Book of Exodus: it is a great
song of praise that the people of God sing to the Lord
-as they stand on the other side of the Red Sea and look
back at what the Lord God just did for them.

They can't help but shout God's praises, singing, "I will sing
unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously the horse and
rider thrown into the sea!"

We want to do the same thing here today.

-Sing God's praises as we come to the table of the Lord and prepare to receive again the amazing new covenant that He was won for us in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

But first:

Can you call to mind the stories of your own life in which God has come to your aid in difficult circumstances?

Can you call to mind times when he has supplied you with what you needed,

-when you had no idea how you would ever get by?

Can you call to mind times when you have felt inadequate for some challenge you faced,

-and God has walked with you step by step through the process and showed you the way ahead?

Are there things that God did for you this past week, that helped you to know He was with you?

-These are the narrative of God's work in your life.

-Remember them. Pay attention to them.

-Let them nurture your "living faith" for the week to come.

And for now, let's respond to God with praise from a heart of thanksgiving as we sing our songs of praise to him together.

Let's pray.