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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
June 28, 2020
4th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Romans 5:6-11; Matthew 9:35:10:8
Hymns: 44; 398; 408; 377:10

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Exodus 19:2-8a

For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain.

³And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ⁴'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. ⁶And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

⁷So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him.

⁸Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Recognizing A Need for Intervention.

People need help. We ought to make this as broad as we can because it is a broad and general truth. People need help. The problem arises when people don't recognize that they need help. By nature we are defensive, and often quite independent. In other words we (that is people in general) don't like to admit we need help when we may in fact be in desperate need of help. We don't want to be perceived as weak, which is what individuals often perceive of themselves when they need help, or to be in trouble, or admit that we messed up and that is why we are in trouble.

There are a great many agencies and programs and businesses that are standing by ready to step in and provide the necessary intervention and help. Doctors and clinics and hospitals are there to intervene when one gets sick, and then the help is often appreciated. But at other times there seems to be more of a stigma attached to admitting that one needs intervention, and human nature resists and would often rather live in denial than to embrace the intervention that could vastly improve one's life.

You know, the problem of sin and its curse is one of those areas where people are naturally disinclined to welcome the necessary intervention, the one intervention that saves. Sin and achieving righteousness and salvation is an area where human pride and abject denial of impending disaster is common even though it ends with disastrous eternal consequences.

With a lesson from Bible history the Holy Spirit brings us a lesson regarding the importance of--

THEME: Recognizing Divine Intervention in our Lives.

The Lord reminded the Children of Israel of their --

I. Deliverance by the Hand of God.

The events recorded in our text took place about three months after the Children of Israel's exodus from Egypt. A great deal had happened in those months preceding their arrival at Sinai where the Lord summoned Moses onto the mountain and there gave Moses the message he was to present to the Children of Israel. The Lord's message began with a reminder of the great deliverance

from bondage they had received by the hand of God. That deliverance came in the form of the ten plagues that had befallen Egypt. These were great and mighty works which only the Lord could do. They were not only to bring proud and mighty Egypt to its knees, but also served as a continuing lesson for the Children of Israel concerning the power of God to save. Again and again and again the power of the Lord was revealed as a power greater even than nature. Again and again and again Pharaoh was forced to admit that the LORD is mighty, and just as often Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to free the Children of Israel from the cruel bondage under which they had suffered.

This was a necessary lesson for the Children of Israel as well that they might comprehend the power of God to save. When the final plague was announced the people were ready. They observed the first Passover with the blood of the pure and spotless lamb delivering them from the Angel of Death that struck down the first born throughout the land of Egypt.

And so the people were freed from a harsh and cruel bondage from which they could not have delivered themselves. And at the same time they were presented with the picture of the deliverance that God would bring to the world to deliver all mankind from the bondage of sin which brings death. This bondage is more oppressive than slavery, more deadly than the taskmaster's whip. This is the bondage from which no one can save himself.

Many centuries later Jesus was born into the world as the Lamb of God who would save His people from their sins. He was the pure and spotless Lamb of God whose precious blood was painted upon the posts of the cross, and by His death He redeemed us from the curse of the Law and the bondage of sin.

There it is in all its glory, God's intervention in the history of this world to save a rebellious and sinful mankind from the curse they had brought upon themselves. There it is! The greatest and most glorious intervention that the Lord has made in our own lives. He has revealed this salvation to us that we might be freed from the oppression of sin and the curse of death.

However, the Spirit's lesson regarding God's intervention in our lives doesn't stop with that one event. It was another three months before the gathering of Israel at the base of Sinai. In those three months many wonders occurred, each of them demonstrating God's loving concern for His people as well as the power of God to deliver. God is faithful and intervenes in the lives of His people for their good and blessing.

In that three months the Lord parted the Red Sea so the people could escape the Egyptian army, and then the Red Sea collapsed in upon their enemies and destroyed them. In His grace the Lord had intervened at just the right time! Israel needed water and water was provided by the Lord's intervention. Again bitter waters were made drinkable. The people needed food, and in a continuing act of providence the Lord provided manna from heaven. The Amalekites attacked the rear guard of Israel, and the Lord delivered them. As long as Joshua and Hur held up Moses' arms as he extended Aaron's staff over the valley the armies of Israel prevailed. The intervention of the Lord was ongoing, and the Lord's intervention was for the good and blessing of His people. That three months laid out a pattern for the people to recognize that deliverance comes by the hand of God. Through Moses the Lord reminded them, *"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself."* (v. 4)

This is an allusion to nature that is quite spectacular. When it is time for the fledgling eaglets to learn to fly they are literally nudged out of the nest by their mother. Suddenly they are tumbling from the heights of their nest toward the earth. By all appearances they are in great peril and must figure out that they need to extend their wings and glide, or fall perilously to the ground and die. But that is not in fact the case. The adult eagles are prepared to intervene to glide under their young and bear them up on their wings before any harm befalls them. And so it happens often in the lives of God's people that we feel we are in great peril and that evil has befallen us, indeed some may falsely conclude that the Lord has put us in great peril, but God is faithful. Even as the Lord bore up the Children of Israel again and again as on eagles' wings, so the Lord continues to watch over His people and bears us up as on

eagles' wings. Such is the faithfulness of our God. He bears us up on eagles' wings that He might bring us to Himself.

Please note the intent of the Lord. He bears us upon on eagles' wings that He might bring us to Himself. This is important that we might understand --

II. God's Goal in Deliverance.

The Lord spelled it out for the people of Israel at Sinai:

Exodus 19: 5-6 “ ‘Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.’ ”

The Lord didn't intervene with such a great and continuing deliverance so that the people of Israel could go on their way and do with their lives whatever suited them, wandering on pathways unholy. The Lord intervened to save them that they might be His people. With His grace and power the Lord was establishing a personal relationship with this people. He was to be their Savior God. They were to be His people. They were to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. First a kingdom with the Lord as their King ruling and directing them in life as a nation as well as individuals. With His great and gracious intervention the Lord was establishing them as a kingdom of priests, meaning that they had access to the one true God that no other nation on earth possessed. They knew the LORD, the one true God. Because of His grace they could turn to Him for help in time of need and He would hear their prayer. Because of His intervention and calling them to be His people Israel could serve the Lord, and not live in the sins of the nations that surrounded them.

To do this they needed to hear the Lord, obey His voice, and keep His covenant. He laid out His will before them, and invited them to be His own special people.

So it is yet today. The Lord has intervened in your life and mine with a wondrous divine intervention. He saved us from sin and

death through the death of His Son. He called us to faith in Jesus as our Redeemer, and He has been there bearing us up as on eagles' wings throughout our lives, all to accomplish His purpose. We read of this in Paul's letter to Titus:

Titus 2:13- 14 "Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ ... gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

He gave Himself for us NOT to free us to go on sinning and serving our own lusts and greed. He gave Himself for us that WE might be His own special people. It is a very personal relationship that Jesus' death and resurrection established. He is our Redeemer God, and we are His own special people. He did this to purify us from living sinfully. He did this that we might be zealous for good works. That means that we ought to be enthusiastic, excited about living to the praise and glory of our God. That starts with regular and faithful worship, and then it goes with us out into the world where we stand out from the rest of the world as being different because we are about Christ in us!

This is why the Lord intervened in world history, and sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. This is why the Lord intervened in your personal life, and called you by the gospel that you might know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

The Lord looks for a response --

III. Embracing God's Deliverance through a Life of Faith.

Exodus 19:7-8 So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. ⁸ Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."

Moses laid it all out before the Children of Israel, reminding them of God's deliverance and telling them of God's desire for them to be His people. They answered as one would expect them to answer, with an enthusiastic positive response! How could they do otherwise when such a great God had delivered them time and

again and bore them up as on eagles' wings! In spite of this enthusiastic response that came from knowledge and faith, it didn't take long for the whole nation to fall into gross sin, worshipping the golden calf no more than forty days later. It takes diligence to serve the Lord, diligence in remaining steadfast in His Word.

How do we respond? Aren't we also eager to serve the Lord, and to serve the Lord with gladness? Of course we are eager and ready to say, "*All that the LORD has spoken we will do.*" (v.8) We can't imagine living without the Lord, and yet it still requires diligence! If one is to be faithful to the Lord we need to hear the Lord and draw our strength from His Word. Good intentions will quickly fall by the wayside if we don't stay in His Word and serve Him day and night.

As we abide in His Word, as we gather together in worship we are encouraged by the reminders of the faithfulness and the grace of our Lord in intervening in our lives and bearing us up as on eagles' wings. He saves us from ourselves, from our sinful desires, and our foolish choices that would have us tumbling to an eternal death. Gathering together we renew our steadfast conviction and with our presence we encourage one another in faith and a life of good works.

“Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word;
Curb those who fain by craft and sword
Would wrest the Kingdom from Thy Son
And set at naught all He hath done.

Lord Jesus Christ, Thy pow'r make known,
For Thou are Lord of Lords alone;
Defend Thy Christendom that we
May evermore sing praise to Thee. (The Lutheran Hymnal 261:1,2)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.