

Overcoming Through Gratitude

August 15, 2021

Overarching Theme: In 2021, FUMC will be SENT with the peace of Christ!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

On Easter evening, the Risen Christ appears to his gathered disciples for the first time since Good Friday and speaks these words: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). Just as Jesus sent his disciples into a divided, conflicted 1st Century with his peace, so he sends us into a divided, conflicted 2021 with his peace.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Exodus 15:19-21 NRSV

¹⁹ When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.²⁰ Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. ²¹ And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

This Week: The Book of Exodus, Exodus 15.

The Book of Exodus, the second of the Old Testament, is the story of God's rescue of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Ex 1-15), Israel's travels in the wilderness (Ex 16-18) and God's making and restoring a covenant relationship with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai as they begin their journey toward the promise land (Exodus 19 -40).

Exodus 15 brings to a climax the story of God's miraculous deliverance of his people from cruel Egyptian bondage. The ensuing victory celebration is encapsulated in a brief poem commonly called "The song of Miriam." This poem is regarded by scholars as being very old, perhaps the oldest Israelite

poem we have and perhaps composed very close to the time of these remembered events.

This brief hymn follows the convention of Israel's hymns in its two parts. First, there is an imperative summons, in this case, "Sing to Yahweh." The summons to praise is itself an act of praise, an exuberant acknowledgment of the LORD and a glad celebration of loyalty to Yahweh. Second, reasons for praise are given, introduced by the particle *for* ("because"). The reason for praise of Yahweh, the incomparable one, is quite specific. Yahweh has overcome the seemingly invincible power of armed might that enforced aggression. The "power" in this poem is not specifically Pharaoh and Egypt. The lack of specificity permits the poem to be readily available as a paradigm for every doxology that celebrates death to tyrants.

The poem (song) is placed on the lips and in the dancing feet of Miriam and the Israelite women. We know elsewhere that there were women especially skilled in the singing required by the community for grief and death (Jer 9:17; 2 Chr 35:25). In the same way, no doubt there were women, perhaps the same ones, skilled in singing and dancing with joy and exultation for liberation, victory, and well-being (cf 1 Sam 18:7). The OT lets us see a community that is easily and readily evoked into the "surplus" activity of liturgy for the emotional, political extremities of joy and grief, well-being and loss.

Despite the exuberance and pathos of the "song of Miriam" recorded in verses 20-21, the community experience of gratitude was short-lived. Surely the journey of the children of Israel recorded throughout the rest of Exodus-Deuteronomy would have been different had they practiced gratitude (maybe accented by song/dance?) each day.

- Adapted from New Interpreters Commentary, Vol 1, pp. 802-803

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. On a scale of 1-10, 10 being a life characterized by gratitude, and 1 being a life characterized by ingratitude (grumbling!), where do you think most people are today? How about you?
2. The children of Israel were grateful for about a day, but they soon downward spiraled into ingratitude and complaint. Do you think the practice of daily gratitude could have prevented this downward spiral? Why or why not?
3. Verse 21 reminds us that Miriam sang. Does singing and worship impact your sense of thankfulness and gratitude? If so, how do you incorporate singing/music into your gratitude practices?

4. What are 3 things that God has done for you that inspires your gratitude today (besides health, weather or family/friends)? What are 3 things that you could choose to grumble about? Which list will you focus on today?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Take time each day to journal in the "*Morning by Morning*" gratitude resource.
3. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week (Exodus 15:21):
And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."