***God’s Story – Our Story***

***God Provides – A Way Out of Egypt***

**January 28, 2024**

**Overarching Theme:** 2024 – A Year in God’s Story

**Instructions:**

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

**Core Point: 2024 can be a year of living into God’s Story as we journey from Genesis to Revelation together.**

**Reflect on this Scripture:** Exodus 14:10-14 NRSV

**10**As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. **11**They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? **12**Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, ‘Let us alone so that we can serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” **13**But Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today, for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. **14**The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.”

**Commentary:** In this reading from Exodus, we have the famous story of Israel’s final deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh and the start of their journey into covenant relationship with God.

More properly, however, the story is a part of the wilderness tradition, setting the stage for themes of the uncertainty of the Israelites and God’s deliverance and providence.

The usual pattern follows something along this line: 1) uncertainty or fear over a threat or crisis, 2) the people grumble at Moses, 3) God through Moses provides, and 4) the crisis is averted.  This rough pattern appears at least three more times before the giving of the covenant and the Ten Commandments in chapter 20: Exodus 15:22-27 (the bitter water), 16:1-15 (bread from heaven), and 17:1-6 (the water out of the rock).

In this case, the threat or crisis is the oncoming Egyptian army, and the Israelites are afraid as one could well imagine.  In reaction, they turn on Moses (the grumbling) and ask, “Was it for want of graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the wilderness?” (Exo 14:10 NJPS).  Moses instead implore the Israelites to have faith in the God that has already brought them this far.  “The LORD will battle for you,” (14:14 NJPS).

And so the stage is set for God’s providence and action as the one who will fight on behalf of Israel against the one who threatens their existence, i.e. Pharaoh.

So God’s angel and the pillar of cloud cut off the Egyptians’ advance and darkness came upon the sky (14:19-20) and then comes the famous cinematic moment: the parting of the sea.  The Israelites are able to cross the muddy ground, but the Egyptians chariots (the very thing that most likely gave them their overwhelming military advantage) are unable to follow and turn to flee but are swept up in the waters.

The crossing of the sea is a story that transitions a people from fear to awe, from doubt to faith, from cries of despair to shouts of joy and worship.  It is because of the God who heard their cries of injustice and has delivered them that they now can sing and dance with joy, liberated for a new life and new purpose.  It is the LORD who turns fear into joy, who delivers us from those dark places of enslavement and exile and brings us through the deep into a new dawn.

 -Online commentary by Geoff McElroy

**Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:**

1. The New Pharaoh did not know his history. He was unaware of how God used the Israelite Joseph to save Egypt in the past. How might he have responded differently if he had remembered? What happens when we forget what God has done for us in the past?
2. Pharaoh then reacts in fear, subjugating the people he sees as a threat. How can unchecked fear lead us to take irresponsible actions?
3. God hears the cries of his people and through Moses, begins to make a way for his people to escape Egyptian bondage. How does Pharoah react when Moses confronts him? How does he respond to the resulting plagues? What does this say about how humans behave when they have great earthly power?
4. Even after their miraculous Passover deliverance from the plague of the firstborn, the escaping Israelites react to Pharaoh’s attempt to recapture them ‘in great fear.’ Re-read what Moses says to them (Exodus 14:13). How might this word of counsel be helpful for you when you feel immobilized by fear?
5. Ultimately, the LORD provides a way to get the Israelites out of Egypt. Can you recall a time when the LORD helped you out of great difficulty? Share with your group as appropriate.

**Activity for the Life of a Disciple:**

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.

Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Exodus 14:13-14
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