

Title: God sees and hears
Text: Exodus 1:1-22

August 18, 2019
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Welcome everyone! We are beginning a new series today on the book of Exodus. We are going to be in this book for the next 18 weeks, and it's going to take us all the way up until Christmas. This is a study I have been looking forward to now for over a year and I believe God has so much he wants to teach us about himself, about his Word, about his power, about his redemption, and about his will for our lives from this book. Some of you are familiar with this book already; others are new to this book. Some of us remember watching Charlton Heston's Ten Commandments growing up. Others more recently have seen Disney's Prince of Egypt. Whether you know this story well or whether this is your first time through it, I believe God has something wonderful in store for us as a church as we go through Exodus together. To begin, I want you to take a few minutes and watch this overview.

<https://www.tvresources.net/resource-library/sermon-series-videos/exodus-series-video--2>

So that's the big idea - God draws us out to draw us in. He redeems us so he can have relationships with us. God delivers us and then dwells with people. And we are going to take these 18 weeks and divide them right down the middle. The first nine weeks we are going to see how God delivers his people (and we won't just be talking about how he delivered the Israelites - we are going to talk about how he delivers us today). And then in the second nine weeks we are going to see God's heart to dwell with his people (and again, we won't just talk about God's desire to dwell with the Israelites - we will talk about his desire to dwell with us.)

As we go through the book of Exodus, we are going to see Jesus on every page! The themes, topics and truths we see in this book point directly to Jesus and set the stage for his eventual arrival. Let me show you some high points, and then we'll talk about them more as we go through this book in the coming weeks.

EXODUS	JESUS
Mass killing of infant boys by Pharaoh (Exodus 1)	Mass killing of infant boys by Herod (Matthew 2)
The miraculous deliverance of Moses at birth (Exodus 2)	The miraculous deliverance of Jesus at birth (Matthew 2)
Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness (Exodus 3)	Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness (Matthew 4)
God reveals himself as "I AM" (Exodus 3)	Jesus reveals himself as "I AM" (Matthew 14)
Moses performs 10 miracles (Exodus 7-11)	Jesus performs 10 miracles (Matthew 8-9)
Israel eats the Passover meal the night before deliverance (Exodus 12)	Jesus eats the Passover meal the night before deliverance (Matthew 26)
The death of Egypt's first born sons brings redemption (Exodus 12)	The death of God's first-born son brings redemption (Matthew 27)
God's people are spared by the blood of a Passover lamb (Exodus 12)	God's people are spared by the blood of the Passover lamb (Matthew 27)

God's people are delivered from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12)	God's people are delivered from slavery to Satan, sin and death (Matthew 28)
God's people were saved through water and are "baptized" in the Red Sea (Exodus 14)	God's people are saved through water and are baptized into Christ (Matthew 28, 1 Corinthians 10)

That's just 10. We could talk about many more. As we go through Exodus, don't think, "Oh that's Old Testament, that's boring and irrelevant." This is so relevant. This is so applicable. Exodus points to Jesus on every page. With that being said, let's go ahead and jump in. Let's read the 1:1-5 **1:1 These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; 3 Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; 4 Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. 5 The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt.**

Now these 70 people going down into Egypt happened about the year 1900 B.C. And they stayed in Egypt for over 400 years. And while they were in Egypt God was faithful to them. He increased their numbers. 1:7 says, "**The Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.** Look at all those ways of saying that they grew. **exceedingly fruitful, multiplied greatly, increased in numbers, so numerous, the land was filled with them.** They started out with just 70 people, but after about 400 years the census shows that there were 600,000 adult men, so if all the men were married and each couple had two kids (remember, no birth control back then!), we are talking, conservatively, around three million people. They've grown so plentiful because of God's promise to them. In Genesis 12 God promised to make them into a great nation. God has kept his promise. In fact, they grew so numerous that the Egyptians began to fear them.

8 Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. 9 "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. 10 Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country." 11 So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. 12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites 13 and worked them ruthlessly. 14 They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

Did you take note of the progression here? In verse 9 Pharaoh begins by sowing hostility amongst his fellow Egyptians towards the Israelites. "There are way too many immigrants. If they keep on growing, they will be a threat to us all." It doesn't begin with violence; it begins with a smear campaign intended to instill fear. Just like in Germany towards the Jews. Just like in Rwanda toward the Tutsis. After fear and hostility are present, these ethnic minorities are seen as a threat that needed to be controlled. 1:11 Says they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor. But they continued to multiply. So the Egyptians ratchet up the violence and evil against them and in 1:13 and 14 it says twice that they worked them "ruthlessly." It literally means "broken down." You now sense the spite and hatred growing. They are not just slaves, they are slaves to be driven like cattle, slaves to be beaten like rugs.

And yet they still the multiplied. So Pharaoh came up with a new strategy. As if slavery wasn't sinister enough, **15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, 16 "When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live."** Kill all the boys. Keep the girls. Why is

that? I don't want to be crass, but in Pharaoh's mind, girls could grow up to meet their needs as servants and sex workers, while boys could grow up to be soldiers who could fight against him. Keep the people you can use. Eliminate those who could pose a threat. A sinister and evil plot that was kept secret. This wasn't a publicly advertised strategy, it was just a command given to the midwives. But it didn't work out as Pharaoh had hoped.

17 The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. 18 Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?" 19 The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive." You got to love this response, right? This is a good old-fashioned case of women looking at a man and saying, "There are some feminine things that you don't understand." And Pharaoh takes their word for it! There are a lot of things that men don't know. I was in a delivery room for the first time just eight months ago. Trust me, I learned some things that I knew nothing about. It was only about 25-30 years ago that men started being allowed into the delivery room when their own children were being born. Pharaoh was legitimately ignorant and took the explanation at face value. **20 So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.** I love this little snippet. Here we have two single women who weren't waiting until they found a husband to be used by God. They weren't waiting until they had a family to be used by God...they lived on mission as single women! They risked life and limb and defied the most powerful man in the world to rescue the lives of innocent children. And God rewarded them.

Some people look at the Bible, and especially the Old Testament and say, "That's going to be boring. That's so irrelevant." That could not be further from the truth. This book is exciting and engaging, filled with heroes and villains, with cliffhangers and unexpected turns. And it's also surprisingly political. Like in this chapter right here, God's word addresses the unjust treatment of immigrants who were ethnic minorities in a country that was a global superpower (and it calls that evil), and at the same time it addresses the state sponsored abortion of babies (and calls that evil, too). Immigration and abortion! Two of the most contentious points of debate in modern politics today. This is God's Word from 3,000 years ago dealing with each of them. The Word of God is as relevant as ever. It is living and active. And his Word is sharp enough to cut people on the right and people on the left equally as it calls us to a place of righteousness.

If we jump back into the story, Pharaoh was determined not to be outwitted by the midwives so he took a different route to eliminate his perceived threat: **22 Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."** Imagine what it would be like as an expecting mother who heard those words. Remember, they didn't have blood tests or ultrasounds. They had no way of knowing if their baby was going to be a boy or a girl. So nine months of anxious waiting...will I get to raise this baby in my womb, or will I have to watch my baby be thrown into the Nile and either drown helplessly or be eaten by crocodiles? Think about that if you were an Israelite parent. As a new dad, I can't even imagine it.

There is a progression of evil and hostility here. It began with racist fear mongering and smear campaigns. Then it advanced to oppression and slavery. Then it advanced to ruthless brutality. Then it advanced to a secret plot to kill their babies. Then it advanced to a public plot to kill their babies. The progression of evil.

Now we just watched the video of the entire story. We know how it ends. But what do you do when you find yourself at this point in the story? There are evil people running the show. You are oppressed and mistreated, and there is no hope in sight, and any reasonable person would ask, "Where is God in all of

this?” Have you ever found yourself in a situation like that? So much darkness, so much pain, so much confusion and just asking, “Where is God in all of this?” I had the chance to sit down with one of the leading Christian thinkers in the world today. This man flies all over the world talking about faith, giving compelling reasons for why we can have confidence in Christianity and believe that Jesus rose from the dead. And I asked him, “As you talk to people from all over the world, what is the number one objection to the Christian faith? What is the primary hang up that keeps people from believing in God?” Do you know what he said? “Pain and suffering.” Put into a sentence: **How can there be a good God if there is so much pain and suffering in the world?** This is such a struggle. I can imagine the Israelites asking that question after 400 years of suffering and injustice. And we ask that question, today, as well. Why did I come from such a dysfunctional family? Why was I abused as a kid? Why did my spouse cheat on me, or leave me? Why do I have cancer? Why did my daughter die in an accident?” We’ve all seen pain and suffering. We’ve experienced more than we can recount. Where is God in all of it? That’s what the Israelites have to be asking. They’ve been slaves for centuries, are ruthlessly oppressed, their children are being murdered at birth. This is not just a philosophical question; this is deeply personal. Sometimes we need to say: **How can there be a good God if there is so much pain and suffering in my world?** How do you respond to that?

Don’t blame God for something done by a person. I know this sounds simple. But it wasn’t God who caused this pain. God wasn’t the one who enslaved them. God wasn’t the one who ordered the murder of their boys. It was a man who was wicked and evil. God gives people free will, but he doesn’t cause people to do evil. We have a lot of parents in the room. If you let your ten-year-old and your eight-year-old play in a room together, and you come back and find that your ten-year-old hit your eight-year-old, did you cause that? No! You hate that. You want your kids to love one another. You’ve taught them to do it. You punish them when they don’t. The only way a parent could ensure that their kid never hits their sibling is to tie them to a bed and lock them in a room and never let them out. And thank God, that is not what our heavenly father does with us.

Even when surrounded by darkness, look for the provision of God. There were so many expressions of injustice and pain and suffering for the Israelites to focus on, but there were also expressions of grace. For centuries God caused them to increase in number. God raised up the two midwives to protect the babies. He is working redemption, even in the midst of brokenness. The same is true in our lives. No matter what situation or hardship you may be in, look for the countless expressions of God’s grace on display in your life.

Trust that God has a plan, and that his plan is good. We are so finite, and our vantage point is so limited. A friend of mine has two daughters, one who is 13 and one who is 7. The 13-year-old was kind of hot and bothered by something that dad decided to do because she couldn’t understand the reason behind it. So he said to her: “Are you smarter than your younger sister?” “Yeah. Obviously!” Why? “I’m older, I’ve had more life experiences.” Are you connecting the dots...I’m 45 and you are 13....you have to trust that I am smarter than you because I’ve been alive a lot longer than you and have a lot more experience. The daughter wasn’t convinced! And we think, “Oh....silly little 13 year old girl...too short sighted and immature to trust her dad.” Don’t we do that with God all the time? We’ve been around 20, 40, 60, 80 years...God is eternal. God is infinite. He knows everything. And sometimes as his children, the most important thing we can do is simply trust that he has a plan, and that his plan is good. God is not the one who causes our suffering, but he always has a plan to redeem it.

Remember that a deliverer is coming! This really is the ultimate answer. Because yes, the world is filled with hardship. And our lives are filled with hardship. But God doesn’t leave us in that place. He comes to our rescue. Listen to what God says in chapter 3:7-8 **“I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them.”** So the people of Israel, enslaved in

Egypt can take heart knowing that even in the midst of all their suffering, God has **seen** them, God has **heard** them. And God is going to come down to **rescue** them. Now for the Israelites, that meant sending Moses to rescue them from Egypt. But for us, it means something so much more! No matter our pain or hardship or hurt, God has not only seen us and heard us, he has come down to rescue us through Jesus Christ. Jesus carried our hardship, absorbed our pain and sorrow and sin, and then gave his life for us on the cross. He came once to make the world right, and he is coming again, to make it right once and for all.

God sees you. God hears you. God has come down to rescue you. And no matter how hard things might get, we remember that our deliverer is coming!