

Sermon for September 3, 2017 – Pentecost 13\*

Exodus 6:2-8 (Evangelical Heritage Version)

**Theme: Trust in the LORD.**

- 1) *He does not forget his promises (2-4)*
- 2) *He knows your problem (5,6)*
- 3) *He will deliver you (6-8).*

*<sup>2</sup>Then God spoke to Moses, telling him, “I am the LORD. <sup>3</sup>I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name, the LORD, I was not known to them. <sup>4</sup>I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land where they were residing as aliens. <sup>5</sup>I certainly have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians have enslaved, and I have remembered my covenant. <sup>6</sup>“Therefore tell the Israelites, ‘I am the LORD. I will bring you out from under the forced labor of the Egyptians. I will deliver you from being their slaves. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup>I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am the LORD your God, the one who brought you out from under the forced labor of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup>I will bring you to the land which I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.’”*

What do you think: will following the Lord in faith ensure you an easy, carefree life? Hardly! Both history and experience teach that a Christian’s faithfulness to the LORD often results in more trouble on this earth – not less. Haven’t you experienced this yourself, as coworkers make fun of you for not joining in with them for some sinful fun; or a family member avoids you because you tried to talk to them about their rocky relationship with Christ?

If this is the case, why, then, should we follow the LORD? Simply put: because we need him. Only he has the power to free our soul’s enslavement. Only he has the love that forgives our sin. Only he can rescue us from every evil attack, and deliver us safely home to heaven.

And we can be confident that he will do this. Why? Because of who he is: the almighty and merciful LORD - creator of heaven and earth. Yes, in spite of all the bad we may experience on this evil earth, **Trust in the LORD:** 1) *He does not forget his promises.* 2) *He knows your problem.* 3) *He will deliver you.*

**Part One:** He does not forget his promises.

Before we dive into our sermon text, let’s consider the situation under which the LORD spoke it. After 40 years of living in exile, Moses was back in Egypt because the LORD commanded him to go to Pharaoh and demand that Israel be allowed to worship Him in the desert. Moses was very reluctant to do this. Why? Because he knew that Pharaoh was a hard man, and the LORD told him that Pharaoh would initially harden his heart against the LORD’s command before being forced to

relent. Nevertheless, trusting in God's promise to deliver his people, Moses did what the LORD commanded, telling Pharaoh to let God's people go.

What happened? Did things automatically get better for Moses and the Israelites? No, they got much worse. Pharaoh increased their work load and beat the Israelite foremen to such a degree that they cursed Moses – blaming him for their sufferings when all he did is follow the Lord's command. This is why, right before our text, Moses prays: *"O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? <sup>23</sup> Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."*

Did the LORD trick Moses into following him? Maybe he really wanted to harm Israel rather than save it? With such thoughts, the devil tempted Moses. Considering all the trouble it brought, is the LORD really worth following?

Remember what I said earlier about the reason Moses was reluctant to go to Pharaoh? One of them was the fact that the LORD told Moses that Pharaoh would initially harden his heart against his message. God never said that Moses' job would be easy. What he promised, rather, is that he would be with him and, at the appropriate time, grant the deliverance and land he swore on oath to give them.

For this reason *God spoke to Moses, telling him, "I am the LORD. <sup>3</sup>I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name, the LORD, I was not known to them. <sup>4</sup>I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land where they were residing as aliens.*

When addressing Moses complaint, the first thing God does is remind him of his name. *"I am the LORD,"* He says. His name "Lord" - Yaweh or Jehovah in Hebrew – literally means: "the one who was, is and will be." He is God in the purest sense of the word – the source of all that exists. Not only that, but along with his name comes his loving reputation. He is the God who mercifully appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – graciously choosing them and their descendants to be his dearly loved people, through whom would come the Savior of all. This was the covenant – or promise – that God made with them. And tied to that covenant was also the promise that, one day, they would inherit the land of Canaan, in which the patriarchs had only lived as strangers.

The LORD did not forget his promises. No, regardless of how things looked to Moses and the Israelites, the LORD was in the process of keeping them. The trouble they experienced was all part of that plan – a part he specifically warned Moses about, so that he would not lose faith.

Like Moses, there are times when we face trouble or hardship for doing the right thing. Why is that? I mean, shouldn't we expect things to get better instead of worse? Doesn't the LORD promise to bless us as we follow him in faith? The answer to that is yes and no. Yes, the LORD certainly promises to bless and deliver all those who trust in him – just as he did for the Israelites. But understand that these blessings are spiritual – not physical. Nowhere does God promise Christians a carefree life on this earth. No, Jesus said: *"In this world you will have trouble,"<sup>ii</sup>* and *"All men will hate you because of me."<sup>iii</sup>*

If that is the case, then why should we follow the LORD? Simply put, because of who he is and the greater salvation he has won for us through Christ's cross. Everything he commands and allows in our lives is meant to serve that purpose – directing our attention to Jesus so that, through repentance and faith in him, we might have eternal life. The LORD has never forgotten the promises he has made to us in Christ. No, in all things – even in the bad we experience - he works for our eternal good. As the Lord was patient with Pharaoh, so he is patient with our world today. But don't confuse God's patience with him forgetting his promise to deliver us. He will do it. Put your trust in him, for he knows all the problems you face.

### Part Two: He knows your problem

The Israelites had been suffering under the Egyptians for quite some time. Moses was 80 years old at the time our text took place, and their bondage began well before he was born. At times they must have felt as if either God had forgotten them, or that he was so far removed from them, that he had no clue how they were suffering.

God dispels such thoughts by telling Moses: *<sup>5</sup>I certainly have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians have enslaved, and I have remembered my covenant. <sup>6</sup>“Therefore tell the Israelites, ‘I am the LORD. I will bring you out from under the forced labor of the Egyptians. I will deliver you from being their slaves. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.*

No, the LORD was not oblivious to the plight of the Israelites. He saw every whip that came down upon the backs of his people. He heard their cries of pain. He felt the weeping hearts of all the mothers who lost their children when Pharaoh demanded that every baby boy be killed. Yes, the LORD saw and heard it all. And now he was about to act. He was going to free them from their bondage – giving them a new land that they could call home

The LORD is not blind to our problems either. Yes, like the Israelites, there might be times when we wonder whether or not God hears our cries or sees our plight. The truth is that he sees and knows it better than we do ourselves. You see, the LORD not only sees the effect of evils we experience, he knows their source: the sin that lies deep in the heart of every man. This is exactly why the LORD took it upon himself to save us. How? By sending his one and only Son to pay for our sins through his death on the cross. The LORD has redeemed us – that is to say, he bought us back from our slavery to sin, death and the power of the devil. What price did he pay? Not gold or silver, but his holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death. He bought us back in order that we might be his own, free people, who would live under him in everlasting righteousness and holiness. Yes, with outstretched arms, and mighty acts of judgment, Jesus has redeemed us from all sin. Because he has done this, we can be sure that he will deliver us from every other evil that threatens our soul.

### Part Three: He will deliver you

The LORD continues: *<sup>7</sup>I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am the LORD your God, the one who brought you out from under the forced labor of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup>I will bring you to the land which I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.*'”

What a promise! The LORD, the one and only true God, from whom everything that exists has its origin, would be Israel’s God - demonstrating his almighty power over everything by bringing them out from under the Egyptians’ oppression. On top of this, LORD would do it all himself - neither desiring nor expecting help from his people - so that their faith would rest on no one other than Him.

The LORD has also delivered each one of us from our greatest trouble. He did it all by himself – knowing that our own effort would do far more harm than good. Having taken our transgressions upon himself and dying on the cross, our sins no longer stand against us. They have all been paid for in full. Yes, the LORD has won the salvation He swore to win – ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin. Through faith in this Gospel, the LORD brings us out from under the yoke of our spiritual slavery - declaring us to be his own, dearly loved people through Holy Baptism. And, as he safely guided Israel through all the evils of Egypt and dangers in the desert, we can be sure that he will deliver us too: safely bringing us through this life home to himself in heaven.

The LORD, the one and only true God, has sworn this. No, the LORD does not promise deliverance from every little inconvenience of this life. But he does promise to use every evil and inconvenience for our benefit – serving our eternal good. God will deliver us just as he promised.

Following the LORD can mean that things seem to get worse and not better. Sometimes it seems to mean suffering and not rejoicing. When the Pharaohs we face (our sinful flesh, the world and the devil) make our life miserable for following the LORD and try to get us to blame God for the evil we experience, remember the LORD’s word in our text: *I am the LORD. . . I will deliver you. . . I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup>I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am the LORD your God. Amen.*

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<sup>i</sup> Exodus 5:22-23 NIV84

<sup>ii</sup> John 16:33 NIV84

<sup>iii</sup> Luke 21:17 NIV84