

THE GOOD NEWS OF A GOD WHO MAKES A WAY FOR US
Sermon for the Fifth Mid-week Lenten Service
Exodus 14:5-31

Dear friends in Christ,

The people of Israel had a deadly enemy bearing down on them. After the night of the Passover, Pharaoh said that the Israelites were free to leave Egypt. Soon, though, he had second thoughts. So, he gathered his army and set out in pursuit.

With the Red Sea ahead of them and the chariots of Pharaoh's army rapidly approaching from behind, it appeared that the Israelites were trapped. They didn't have time to go around the sea, they didn't have a way to get across it, and they weren't prepared to face the Egyptian forces in battle. They had no way of saving themselves, and there appeared to be no way out.

But where there seems to be no way, the Lord makes a way.

The LORD said to Moses, **“Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground.”**

Just as the LORD had said it would be, so it was. **“Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.”** The people of Israel safely made their way through the Red Sea.

When they had made it through, the Lord told Moses, **“Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.” ²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. ²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained.**

“Thus,” as Moses wrote, **“the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians.”**

Seeing that they had been saved by the LORD's power, **“the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.”**

Embarking on their new life as God's redeemed people, they set out to go where the LORD would lead them. A long journey still lay ahead, but through God's gracious deliverance, a new day had dawned for Israel.

Looking back to the miraculous Red Sea crossing, we marvel at what God did for the Israelites that day—and all the more so when we see that He did it not only for them but also for us!

By saving the people of Israel from Pharaoh, God preserved the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In doing that, He kept alive His promises to them—including the promise of an Offspring of Abraham through whom all nations would be blessed!

More than that, not only did God preserve His promise to send us a Saviour, but, as He delivered Israel through the waters of the Red Sea, *He also gave a preview of how that promised Saviour would ultimately deliver us.*

Apart from Christ, we all face mortal danger from deadly enemies. The devil desires and seeks our destruction, and our own sinful nature often plays right into the devil's hands. James writes, *“You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions”* (James 4:2-3). And because of our sin, death is like a dark shadow following us, an enemy pursuing us.

Threatened by these dangers on every side, we would seem to be trapped. We cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition any more than the Israelites could have saved themselves from Pharaoh's armies. Whatever direction we look, the way is blocked.

But again, where there seems to be no way, the Lord makes a way.

The God who gave Moses to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt gives His own Son, Jesus Christ, to save us from sin, death, and the devil.

To make a way for Israel, the LORD directed Moses to lift up his staff and stretch out his hand over the sea. To make a way for us, Christ is lifted up on a cross of wood, with His arms stretched out over Mount Calvary.

Like the people of Israel, we are safely delivered from our enemies. But while Moses, too, passed through unharmed, Christ secures our safety *only at the cost of His own life.*

To save us from sinking down into the depths of judgment for our sin, Christ makes a safe path for us to the shores of freedom. And as He cuts off the devil's pursuit of our souls, Christ Himself is crushed as the waves of judgment crash down and flood over Him. By His death, He saves us from death.

But this exodus wasn't done just yet. With Christ crucified, dead, and buried, it certainly appeared that the way of Christ had come to its end. But once again, where there seems to be no way, the LORD makes a way. In vindication of this self-sacrificing Saviour, God the Father lifts Him up out of the miry depths and delivers our Deliverer! Christ is raised to life, never to die again—and by His resurrection, He opens to us the way of everlasting life!

In fact, not only does Christ open a way to us—not only does He make a way for us—but He himself *is* the Way. This Way is trustworthy, for Christ is the Truth. And in Him, we find life, for Christ is Himself the Life. He is the one true way to life, and in Christ, God makes the way that saves us from all threats and gives us everlasting life.

So, He now comes to us to bring this life to us personally, that in Him we may have life and have it abundantly.

And to do this, He again works in a way that bears a striking resemblance to Israel's exodus! As the Lord once delivered the Israelites into a new life through the waters of the Red Sea, He now delivers us personally to new life through the waters of Holy Baptism. The sinful nature is drowned, and we emerge safely on the other side.

Martin Luther makes that connection in a baptismal prayer as he says to the LORD, "*Almighty and Eternal God, . . . You drowned hard-hearted Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, yet led Your people Israel through the water on dry ground, foreshadowing this washing of your holy baptism.*"

By water and the Word, we are baptised into Christ, and the saving benefits of His death and resurrection are applied to us personally. Remember the words of the Apostle Paul to the Romans, "*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His*" (Romans 6:3-5).

Through the waters of baptism, we are delivered to a new life in Christ. So, you can think of your baptism as your own personal exodus.

In Christ, you have been set free, and the fullness of life is yours. May you rejoice in your Redeemer from this time forth and forevermore. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

