

Then They Shall Know

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[0 : 00] This is God's Word. Please keep that passage open in front of you. Let us pray for his help together as we turn to it. Father, we thank you again for this, your word. We pray that by your Spirit you would make yourself known to us, that we would know that you are the Lord.

Lord, speak to us now for your glory. Amen. Amen. I wonder if you have ever found yourself faced with a task that you do not feel equipped for.

Maybe you've found yourself sitting in the exam hall and there's questions in the paper that you are sure weren't covered in the semester. Perhaps you've thrown yourself into the, or you've found yourself thrown into the deep end at a new job, given far more responsibility than you've been trained for.

Every day of parenthood feels a little bit like that. You've got a very important job to do, but you definitely don't feel equipped for it. And you find yourself thinking, I'm not sure I'm up to this. I'll do my best. I'll give it everything I've got. But I don't think my best is going to be anywhere near good enough. I think that is where Moses sort of finds himself at the beginning of our passage this morning.

[1 : 25] He has been given a task to do, and quite a big one at that. Go to God's enslaved people and set them free from the most powerful king in the world, so that everyone would know who the Lord is.

That is the task Moses has given. Save my people for my glory. Now, to start with, Moses wasn't even up for giving it a go, was he? Things got off to a rocky start, because to begin with, Moses was like a teenager claiming to have an unbearably sore stomach on the morning of a maths exam. Right, back in chapter 4, he was pulling out, wasn't he? Every excuse he could think of, because he wanted out. He didn't want anything to do with this, but eventually Moses did go.

So, he went before Pharaoh and did as God commanded. But even then, things did not go to plan, did they? We saw that last week.

At least, not according to the plan Moses had in his head. Because instead of freeing and enslave people, Moses' intervention only seemed to make things worse. The already dreadful conditions that the Israelites were working in were made even worse, so that Moses' own people were annoyed that he had come to try and save them.

[2 : 43] Pharaoh was angry at Moses. The Israelites are angry at Moses. And then the Lord says to Moses in verse 10 of chapter 6, I want you to go and do exactly the same thing again.

What you did at the start of chapter 5, that thing where it made everyone angry at you, do that again. Go in, tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to let the people of Israel go out of his lands.

You might be tempted at first to read Moses' response as kind of another excuse, but given the events of the last two chapters, I think we can kind of safely assume something different is going on here. Moses isn't trying to get out of it.

He's given it a go. But in his eyes, it's gone disastrously. He's no longer a coward. He just really doesn't think he is up to the task.

Not up to the task of making God known. What the rest of our passage this morning shows us is, is how the Lord will make himself known.

[3 : 54] Even through someone who does not think they are up to the task. So we'll see first that God makes himself known through someone who doesn't think they're up to the task. And then through the ordinary obedience, extraordinary signs, and an obstinate enemy.

Now let's just see that as we follow the kind of narrative this morning, beginning with our first point then. The Lord will make himself known through an imperfect but chosen priesthood.

The reason Moses gives there in verse 12 for him not being up to the task, he says, I'm a man of uncircumcised lips. We get it repeated again at the end of verse 30.

That kind of shows us, this is bookending, something happening in the middle. Now that language of uncircumcised lips is probably not language we use every day. But Moses is saying that his words don't cut it.

He's gone and spoken to Pharaoh. He's gone and spoken to the Israelites. And no one has listened. So God, why are you asking me to do it again?

[5 : 01] My words aren't working. What makes me the right person to make you known? That is the question that sets the boundaries around this section.

What makes me, Moses, the right person to make you, the Lord, known to everyone? And the answer is in a genealogy.

Probably not what we expected, is it? And it really comes out of nowhere, doesn't it? We've had six chapters of narrative. There's loads more to come. It's this kind of great storytelling of Exodus.

And yet, tucked in the middle of it all is this long list of names. Genealogies probably aren't the chapters in the Bible we get excited about reading. And yet, they are every bit as important as the more memorable stories.

And they are very much part of the story. So what makes Moses up to the task of making God known? Two things this genealogy teaches us.

[6 : 10] First, Moses being the right man for the job has nothing to do with who Moses is. If you want to know why a genealogy is in the Bible, more often than not, you just have to look closely at the details.

Particularly, looking out for the unexpected details. If Moses just kind of wanted to trace his family line from entry in Egypt to Exodus out of Egypt, he only really needed to record seven names here. Levi, Kohath, Amram, Aaron and Moses, Eleazar, Phinehas. Job done. Let's move on.

But there was a lot of other names in there, wasn't there? We saw in our series in Genesis that the Bible did not shy away from the flaws of God's family.

This genealogy goes out of its way to highlight them. We don't need to spend too long here, but let me give you a kind of very brief biography of some of the people listed here.

[7 : 19] Reuben, he slept with his father's wife. Simeon and Levi, they murdered an entire village in a calculated massacre.

Amram married Jochebed, who was his aunt. That's not okay. Moses himself, as we've already seen, kindled God's anger through his stubborn refusal to return to Egypt.

Aaron, well, he led the entire nation into idolatry and caused a national plague. Nadab and Abihu offered unauthorized fire before God and were struck down for their sin. And Korah led a rebellion against the Lord's appointed ruler.

If you want a direct line from Levi to Phineas, lots of those people do not need to be mentioned. Korah is way off-piste, but here they are.

And I think the point is, in part, to, in a sense, validate Moses' claims that he is a man of unclean lips. Look at who he is.

[8 : 28] Look at where he's coming from. Look at what is coming in his bloodline. It's not much to write home about, is it? So what makes Moses up to the task of making the Lord known?

The first thing this genealogy teaches us is that it has nothing to do with who Moses is. But that's not the end of the story. Because the second thing this genealogy teaches us is that Moses, being the right man for the job, has everything to do with who God has chosen him to be and who God will make him to be.

Because for all the flaws of this family history, there is one thing that would have jumped out immediately to every year's right. Maybe you picked up on it too. This isn't really Moses' genealogy. Do you notice that as we read through it? Moses barely gets a mention. Moses' children, who we know exist from earlier chapters, they aren't mentioned at all. Because the focus is on Aaron, Moses' brother, and his descendants.

Now that might not mean much to many of us sitting here this morning, but to them then, standing on the edge of the promised land, they would have known immediately that the focus is being fixed firmly on God's chosen priests.

[9 : 49] The descendants of Levi, specifically the sons of Aaron, the priests were God's chosen intercessors who brought sacrifices from the people before God to atone for their sin and were

supposed to teach the people God's commandments.

They were set apart to make God known. To enable the people to come before God through sacrifice, to reveal God to the people as he had revealed himself in his words.

Moses wasn't an isolated individual in being given this task to make the Lord known, and Moses wasn't alone in not being up to the task on his own merit. And yet everyone in the Israelite camp knew the priests were up to the task because God had set them aside for that very purpose. It had nothing to do with who they were in themselves. It had everything to do with who God made them to be. They could make him known because of who he had chosen them to be, imperfect as they were.

Even more than that, they were chosen and precious in the sight of God. That is the Moses and Aaron that God was going to deliver his people through.

[11:14] Verse 26 and 27, put the kind of bold and italics on it. This Moses and this Aaron, these are the Aaron and Moses. It was they who spoke to Pharaoh, this Moses and this Aaron, not mighty men of valor, but men chosen by God.

Now, we've mentioned a few times already in this series, we want to be careful about kind of substituting ourselves into Moses' shoes.

Normally, as we saw last week in this story, we are the ordinary Israelite, tempted to go back to our slave master asking for a little slack. Moses is God's chosen deliverer, but we are not.

But I think we can draw some lines down to us today when Moses brings his weakness to the fore. Moses was called to make God known as one from God's chosen priesthood.

But he was hesitant. He didn't think he was up to the task. He saw his own weakness and thought, are you sure, God? Are you sure I'm the right man for the job?

[12:28] The whole nation would later be called to be a kingdom of priests to make God known as his chosen people. They were, in a slightly different way, to follow in Moses' footsteps, and so are we.

We read earlier from 1 Peter 2 where the apostle writes to the New Testament church that we are, in the sight of God, chosen chosen and precious, Chosen to be a holy priesthood.

Chosen to be a holy priesthood that does what? To proclaim the excellencies of him who called us. To make the Lord known as his chosen priests.

priests. That is the task we have been given. But maybe we find Moses' words on our lips as we are called to go.

Maybe not talking about uncircumcised lips, but all the same, doubting whether we are really up to the task. Because, look at me.

[13:46] Look at me. Look at us. Are we really up to it? If you, if you happened to peer into our window this morning, well, I would have been a little disturbed, but you also would have seen someone who absolutely did not think they were up to the task.

But most Sunday mornings I wake up and think, I can't do it. I'm not up to the task because look at me. Every single Sunday I need to hear God tell me, you're absolutely right.

You're not up to the task. But I am. And I've chosen you to make me known. Again, and again, and again, and again.

Who am I? It doesn't matter. I have chosen you. Perhaps like Moses, we can even point to our past attempts, a supposed evidence of our inadequacy.

Maybe you've tried to make Jesus known to those around you. You've shared the gospel with your friends, but it seems to have done more harm to your relationships than good. Now my parents don't want to hear the gospel.

[15:16] My friends think I'm straight up weird. I tried to do what was right, but everything just seemed to go wrong. What do we think when God calls us to go again? I'm not up to the task.

I don't have it in me. I'm not the right person for the job. Really easy, isn't it, to look at what we perceive as failure and think, nope, I've not got it.

to that God says, no, you've not got it, but I do. And I've chosen you to make me known, to reveal me as my chosen priesthood, to declare the excellence of me who called you out of darkness and into a marvelous light.

Let me encourage you this morning, if you don't feel up to the task, you're not alone. You're not alone in not feeling up to it, but more than that, you are not alone. Because we don't follow in the footsteps of Moses, do we?

We follow in the footsteps of Jesus, our perfect and chosen great high priest who has made himself known to us that we might make him known to the world.

[16:28] We go in his name and in his strength aware of our own weaknesses, but assured that our weakness will only ever shine a greater light on his strength.

So how will the Lord make himself known? First of all, through an imperfect but chosen priesthood. And secondly then, the Lord will make himself known through obedient messengers, great signs, and a hard-hearted enemy.

That's a bit of a mouthful, isn't it? But there's a lot in there because there's a lot in these verses. And all of it together, it is laying the foundation, giving us the blueprint of what is to come over the next few chapters.

It's the rough outline that every coming plague will fill in with more and more detail. Obedient messengers, great signs, a hard-hearted enemy.

Let's just notice each of these three things in the text there before us before we kind of take a step back and think about what it all means and what we can expect to see going forward. First of all, obedient messengers, in verse 1 of chapter 7, we pick up where we left off.

[17:39] Moses is able to make the Lord known because of who the Lord has made him to be. And for Moses, that meant being made to be like God to Pharaoh. Obviously, Moses is not being made divine, but he's being made to represent God before Pharaoh in a unique way with his own prophets.

And that is a pretty heart-in-the-mouth role to step into because Pharaoh was seen as God, not just by himself, but by his nation. And yet, Moses and Aaron are to go as messengers of the Lord, the God, representatives of him and his words.

But as his chosen representatives, they do exactly what they are commanded to. It's anything but easy. It meant putting everything on the line. But look there at verse 6.

Moses and Aaron did so. They did just as the Lord commanded them. Again, in verse 10. So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the Lord commanded.

And it is through their obedience, through the obedience of God's chosen deliverer, which is simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary that the Lord makes himself known.

[19:00] The Lord makes himself known through obedient messengers. Secondly, the Lord will make himself known through great signs. As God sends Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, he promises to multiply his signs and wonders in the land of Egypt and bring great acts of judgment.

We're going to see that play out in the famous ten plagues over the next few Sundays. But before we even get to the first plague, we get a foretaste of what is to come. Because as Moses and Aaron obediently go before Pharaoh in verse 10, Aaron casts down his staff and it becomes a serpent.

We've already seen something similar before back in chapter 4. Perhaps you remember something of the significance of the symbolism here. Because the serpent was the symbol of Egyptian power. Even if you were to kind of Google after the service Tutankhamun's famous mask, you'll see a serpent at the top ready to strike. It was the symbol of Egyptian power.

And of course, long before there was an Egyptian Pharaoh on the throne, there was a serpent in the garden. It's not just a symbol of Pharaoh, it's an embodiment of God's enemy.

[20:19] And here, with this first sign, before we get to the first plague, Aaron casts down his staff. God is saying, I'm in control here. It is within my power to create and destroy.

But then, something happens which is perhaps quite surprising to us. Verse 11, then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret hearts.

For each man cast down his staff and they became serpents. Whoa. Hold on a minute. What do we do with that?

The 21st century Metulist that maybe exists and some of us wants to kind of explain it away or dismiss it as make-believe? The Bible has a much more obvious and perhaps much more uncomfortable answer.

There are spiritual forces of evil at work in this world and they are strong. In fact, I think this little scene is crucial in laying the foundations for what is to come over the next few chapters and how we understand the next few chapters of the world.

[21:41] There will be lots of physical plagues but make no mistake, this is a battle that transcends what can be touched.

It is a spiritual battle between God and his great enemy. God is setting his people free from physical slavery but there is a spiritual dimension to this rescue that transcends what is happening on the ground.

But the outcome of this battle is in no doubt because even before round one begins God is landing knockout blows. Aaron's serpent goes around and swallows up the magician's staffs.

Must have been quite the sight but when it comes to seeing remarkable things this is just the beginning. And it is the beginning too when it comes to a hardened heart.

Because thirdly the Lord will reveal himself through a hard-hearted enemy. We're going to be wrestling with this language for a few weeks and the answer will hopefully become increasingly clear as we go.

[22 : 51] We'll hesitate to say perfectly clear. But what is perfectly clear from the very beginning is that God plans and knows he is going to harden Pharaoh's heart to make himself known.

Verse 3 I will harden Pharaoh's heart. Verse 5 Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord.

Verse 13 Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

Now before we get maybe really uncomfortable with this just remember who Pharaoh is. Pharaoh has set himself up against God and against his people in a unique way from the very beginning. He has dismissed God's name he has ignored God's command he has crushed God's people. And I think we can safely say he was on the same page as his genocidal predecessor who commanded that every baby boy of the Israelites would be drowned in the Nile.

This is not a kind of good guy caught in the wrong place at the wrong time so that God can make a point. This is a truly wicked man but more than a wicked man he is the serpent king.

[24 : 07] He is not just portrayed to us as just another opponent of God's people he is the enemy of God himself. And the Lord determines to harden his heart so that everyone else the Egyptians included would know that he is the Lord.

And Pharaoh's hard heart will mean plenty of opportunities for God to reveal himself. And we need that.

I mentioned a few minutes ago my need to learn every Sunday that I can't do it by my own strength. We are slow to learn aren't we? Slow to learn quick to forget. As the ten plagues play out God is telling us here before they begin that he is not being slow to free his people it's that all people Israelite and Egyptian alike are slow to know who he is.

We need the same message drummed into us again and again because we are so very quick to forget who the Lord is. God will use Pharaoh's hard heart to make himself known to many people who would otherwise have never batted an eyelid.

[25 : 34] Moses and Aaron will go before Pharaoh in obedience to his command again and again and again. God will work great signs and wonders again and again and again.

Pharaoh will harden his heart and his heart will be hardened again and again and again so that everyone would know who the Lord is. Because God doesn't just save his people for their sake he saves his people for his glory.

God to make himself known. And how true that is of the greater rescue to come that was to come for them that has come for us.

As I'm sure many of you are aware, I'm sure I just prayed for earlier, we've recently started a Christianity explored course. It just takes you through the gospel of Mark in a kind of very foundational way that presents the gospel in as simple terms as it can.

I've been a Christian for more than a decade, I spent four years at seminary, I've read the Bible from cover to cover, I've been a minister here for almost three years, I sit down and go through some relatively simple questions about a relatively straightforward book of the Bible and I need it so, so much time and again, because I need to hear it, because I need reminded of who God is, not because I haven't heard what Mark says before, but because I constantly need reminded of who Jesus is, to be told again and again that he is Lord, to be shown it, not once, not twice, not three times, but as many times as I can possibly hear.

[27 : 29] I need to see God revealed through Jesus' ordinary but extraordinary obedience. I need to see Jesus revealed through signs and wonders, I need him to reveal himself through his victory over an obstinate enemy who refuses to bow before him.

I need that, we all need that, because we're slow to learn and quick to forget. This has all been recorded, Moses is writing all this to a generation of people on the edge of the promised land who

would have known all this fine well.

They could have just said, couldn't he, and then there was ten plagues and the Israelites would have known it, but they need walk through it again and again. We're going to spend three weeks over the next nine plagues, there's good reason for breaking it up into threes, they will not be the same sermon on repeat, but there will be overlapping points made.

Obedient messengers, great signs, a hard-hearted enemy, will see it again and again, but as we do so, please do not switch off thinking I've heard this before. You might have heard it before, you might have seen it before, but you need to hear it again.

Just like we need to keep coming back to the gospel again and again, we need God to reveal himself to us. We need the Lord to reveal himself to each and every one of us.

[28 : 53] And praise God, he is ready to bear with our slowness. He is eager to make himself known for our good, but more than that, for his glory.

And we are called in our weakness to go and make him known because of who he has made us to be. We need reminded of who the God we make known is and of why he is worthy to be made known.

Mighty to save, ready to rescue, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity, but by no means clearing the guilty.

That is who he is. That is who he has revealed himself to be and that is who he will continue to reveal himself to be. Let us pray that we would have hearts softened and eyes opened to see who he is, that we might make his glory known to all the earth.

Let us pray for that now together as we close. Father, we praise you for who you are.

[30 : 17] Lord, that in spite of our many imperfections, you have made yourself known to us, and that in your grace, Lord, you choose us to make you known.

Lord, we thank you for your patience with us. We thank you for your readiness to reveal yourself with ever greater clarity. We thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus, the image of the invisible God, the one to whom we look to to see you in all your glory, to see your character shine through in all its beauty, the one who is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, the one who forgives us our every iniquity, the one who is just and good, who is kind and gracious, who is full of love.

Lord, we pray that you would soften our hearts, that you would open our ears, not just to receive your word now, but to receive it through the week, to receive it as we come back again and again, that we would know more and more of you, that we would behold your glory and love to make that glory known to all people.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.