

Egypt & Exodus

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Sermon 2: Justice and Grace

Exodus 11:1-10; 13:1-22; 12:1-51

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- March 15, 2020

Well, good morning, Grace. We're very scattered – this is a very unusual set of circumstances and a first for Grace and a first for a lot of churches in America. We had a meeting on Thursday, a dinner and then an extended meeting with all the pastors and ministers and the elders, and we came up with wonderful plans about how to get through the next two weeks, counting this one. So, on Thursday night from 9:00 it was ready to go.

By Friday morning at 9:00, none of that mattered. Everything had changed. And so, we were realizing that we could only make plans in the moment. And we'll continue to keep you posted on what we'll be doing next and how we'll be doing it. But we're grateful that we have the technology available to bring you our worship time together – at least our learning time together -- today in your living room. And one of the opportunities it does bring to us as a church is that we can still be a family scattered. But you get to be a family united in your living rooms. If you have a family, now you can all go to church together. You can all sit in front of the TV set and watch the learning time together. We'll work on how we can get worship applied to our broadcast next week and the weeks to come. But it's giving us a new opportunity, a new experience.

At Grace Covenant Church we believe that every believer is a minister, and we're looking at this a great opportunity for everyone to be a minister amongst the people that are around. God put you here for this time and this place for this very purpose – to care for other people and to bring them the love of Christ and the comfort of His sovereignty, even in this time. So, let's be ministers to the members that live under our roof, to people in our neighborhood, to people that we have contact with. Let's be especially aware of people that might have special needs because maybe they're older and alone, and how we might be able to serve them. And we'll continue to work on that as a church family. But again, at Grace we've always believed that every believer is a minister and we want to look for an opportunity to do ministry.

Before He left, Jesus said, “I leave you my peace. This is the peace that I give you. Not the peace the world has that’s fragile and volatile, but this resounding peace that is resting in the sovereignty of God. So, let’s keep that in mind as we venture forward into whatever is next.

The president said that today, Sunday, is a National Day of Prayer about this circumstance that we find ourselves in. So, before we start our learning time together, let’s acknowledge that – the church united, praying together.

Lord, we do lift up this global event, this illness, this virus that’s taking over all of our thoughts in many respects, and certainly some of the decisions that we make throughout the day. Lord, I’d ask that You would calm us and make Your spirit obvious and present in our lives. And in that calmness, that we might be able to look out and focus on how we could serve and care for those around us. Lord, give us insight. Give us imagination on how we can look for ways to bring your love and caring to the faces that we encounter throughout this experience.

Lord, we’d ask that You would continue to guide the leaders and the medical personnel that are involved in this, that they might find their way out, that loss of life would be limited and even illness would be curtailed. So, we look forward to seeing the answers to these prayers. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Well, we’re going to be doing communion today. One of the reasons that we were dedicated to doing today’s learning time was the idea of having communion together as a church all over the city of Austin. I hope you were notified through our Realm accounts anyway, that you received an e-mail or watched that we were going to do communion. If you have communion elements available to you and whoever you’re with, that would be great.

One of our big plans is that we had already ordered these self-contained communion thingies. And they didn’t come in time. And so, we ordered another set. So, we have 3,000 of these waiting for us, maybe for some other time. They’re apparently dreadful.

Anyway, if you’ll have that available, we’ll be starting that in just a few minutes.

Introduction

We’re looking through a survey of the Bible and we’re looking at, in many respects, salvation history. This is God’s plan to save humanity, for all those who would answer His call.

And in the story so far, we find at the end of the Book of Genesis that Joseph has gone to Egypt and now seventy-two of his family members, the sons of Abraham, are in Egypt. And when you open the Book of Exodus, it's 400 years later. And now those seventy-two have become two to three million children of God. And it's time to leave. It's time to go back to the Promised Land.

Exodus chapter 1, verse 8, has this ominous sentence that introduces this exodus story: "And there arose a Pharaoh who knew not of Joseph. And he said to his leaders, 'The masses of these Hebrews are a threat to our national security. And so, we must enslave them. We must control them.'"

But even the enslavement was not working. The population continued to grow, which meant there was still a great threat to at least this Pharaoh and to the nation of Egypt. And so, the Pharaoh decreed and made a law that all the sons of Israel, upon their birth, would be destroyed. The boys would be thrown into the Nile River on their birthday.

Exodus 4:21

YHWH said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go."

God saw this and grieved. He saw the misery and He saw the death and He said, "I'll do something about that." And He raises up Moses to be an instrument of salvation and He tells him the future plan that will be taking place. And He tells him that plan in chapter 4 of Exodus. It's important that we all know this going in. He says to Moses, "Look, I'm going to go and send you to Pharaoh and you're going to do miraculous and powerful expressions of my sovereignty against the gods of Egypt. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he does not let the people go, so that people can see the extent of my power."

Exodus 4:22-23

“Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what YHWH says: Israel is my firstborn son,²³ and I told you, ‘Let my son go, so he may worship me.’ But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.’”

And then it says this: “Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what YHWH says: Israel is my firstborn son ..’” --- those babies --- “ ‘and I told you, “Let my son go, so that he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go; so I will kill you firstborn son.’”

So, before it even starts, it’s about whose son will survive this. This is about justice. It’s about making things right.

Now when we study this section of Scripture, you’ll see multiple times when it says “Pharaoh’s heart was hardened.” And I felt like it would be necessary to at least try to explain that. First of all, in the phrase “hardening Pharaoh’s heart”, Pharaoh does most of the hardening, as you read through. It says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. And then, on the sixth plague, God intervenes and it says that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. And while it would look as though God is actually contrasting the will of Pharaoh, it is not that. It’s actually encouraging the will of Pharaoh.



Let me try to explain. Just last month the World Boxing Heavyweight Championship was fought again. It was the Wilder vs. Fury fight. Some of you might know about that battle. And Wilder was the ruling heavyweight champion. His win record is astounding. Of the last forty-two victories, forty-one were knockout punches. He'd defended this title ten times. And this was the second time he'd fought Fury. But this one didn't go like the others. As a matter of fact, on the third round Wilder was knocked to the canvas, the first time he'd been knocked down in years. And it happened again and again. And then finally in the seventh round his trainer threw in the towel to protect him from permanent injury.





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This is the way that Wilder responded to that. He said, “I will fire that trainer because I would rather die in the ring than have someone throw in the towel. I am a warrior.”

Wow. So, when he became too weak to fight, his trainer stopped the fight. That’s somewhat like what’s happening with Pharaoh. Pharaoh is saying, *Oh, it’s the sixth round and I’m becoming too weak to fight. It is as though he asks YHWH, Will you harden my heart so I can make it all ten rounds? I want to make it to the end of these plagues and I’m growing weak. I’m growing cowardly. Will you harden my heart? And YHWH says, I will. I can do that.*

Exodus 5:2

But Pharaoh said, “Who is YHWH that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know YHWH and besides, I will not let Israel go.”

When Pharaoh hears Moses say, “Let my people go,” he answers in this way, very sarcastic. He says, “Who is YHWH that I should obey His voice and let Israel go? I do not know YHWH, and besides, I will not let His people Israel go.”

So therein is the introduction to the ten plagues. Each of these plagues are introducing YHWH himself -- “Who is YHWH that I should obey His voice?” And with each one of these

plagues, it's an attack, it's an assault, on one of the gods of Egypt. It's an epic story. People are still making it into a movie this very day. And the nine plagues that precede the tenth are nothing more than an inconvenience compared to the tenth plague.

The Tenth Plague

Exodus 11:4-8

So Moses said, “This is what the LORD says: ‘About midnight I, I will go throughout Egypt. ⁵ Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. ⁶ There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt – worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. ⁷ But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal.’ Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. ⁸ All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, “Go, you and all the people who follow you!” After that I will leave.” Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.

The tenth plague is announced from Moses to Pharaoh in the eleventh chapter of Exodus. I'll read it for you. “And Moses said, ‘This is what YHWH says: “About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle will die as well. There will be a loud wailing throughout Egypt – worse than there has ever been before or will ever be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark, not an animal will be lost. Then you will know that YHWH makes a distinction”’” – that word is “redemption” – “ ‘ “between Egypt and Israel. All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and begging, ‘Go, go, will you all go, and everyone that follows you! Please leave.’””” That was the decree. The last sentence says, “And Moses left Pharaoh” --- and it says --- “hot with anger.”

Now after this has been stated to Pharaoh, there is some time of preparation. During that time of preparation, God further expresses His justice in this story in that He has the Israelis go

to their Egyptian friends and ask for gold and silver. And the passage says, “And the LORD gave them favor in the eyes of the Egyptians and the leaders of Egypt, so that they might be generous towards the Israelis.”

And people ask why that took place --- why was that necessary? First, it’s a matter or issue of justice. And they are settling accounts. This is back pay for services previously provided while they were in slavery. And the second point of loading up Israel with wealth before they leave town is this. A scholar writes this: “The Israelites march out of Egypt through the front door, with dignity – like God’s people. This exaltation of Israel is another humiliation for Egypt.”

Exodus 12: The Turning Point

So, now we’re in Exodus chapter 12. This is a turning point in all of human history. This is the introduction to the nation of Israel. This is Israel’s birthday. It is required of Israel to change their calendars to mark this birthday. So, in Exodus chapter 12, it says: *From now on this is month one, day one, of year one. This is your birthday. This is how Israel was born out of Egypt.*

And God says through Moses, “Listen to this carefully. Follow these instructions.” As a matter of fact, He states it two times. He says, *YHWH will come through Egypt with the destroyer. And every life of every firstborn male that’s a mammal will be lost. Justice is coming to Egypt. And so, this is what you’re to do. On the tenth day of the month, on the tenth day of this first month, the head of the household is to go and take a male lamb that’s one year old. That lamb must be without spot or blemish. It has to be perfect.*

On the fourteenth day of the month, four days with this lamb living with you, you are to slaughter that lamb. Cut its throat at twilight, drain the blood into a bowl. Take that blood, go outside the outside door frame, and rub that blood on the door. Put it on the top. Put it on the two sides. Make it a painting. Cover the frame of the door – paint it in blood. Just do that. And then go back inside. And then never leave until you’re told to. Don’t go back outside. If you go back outside, you’ll die. While you’re inside, take that lamb and cook the lamb over an open fire. Do not quarter that lamb. It must be cooked in its entirety. Don’t break a bone on that lamb. Cook it over an open fire. This is the menu, this roasted lamb with bitter herbs. I want you to eat bitter lettuce to help you remember the bitterness of the slavery that you experienced in Egypt.

This event is called Passover. It will be a memorial service that they have every year at this time on their birthday. In addition to the roasted lamb and the bitter herbs, they're also to eat what's called unleavened bread. That means dough that hasn't had yeast added to it, because if you add yeast to the dough, it takes too much time for it to rise and then cook. So, if you don't add that, it's unleavened, un-yeasted bread, because you're in a hurry. That's kind of the last part, is that you cook this meal and then you eat this meal quickly. If there's any leftover lamb, you're to burn everything. And then you're supposed to eat this with this dress code in mind. You wear your running shoes. You wear your hiking boots. You bring your hiking staff. You pull up your dress and tuck it in your belt. We're leaving soon. When the command is given, we've got to go. That's why there's no time, even for this bread to rise.

Why? Stop and think about this strange meal that is ordered by Moses from God. This meal – why do this meal? It doesn't make sense. I'm taking questions.

Yeah, why are we doing this? What does this have to do with the angel of death, the destroyer?

The answer is, I'm not taking questions. Just do this. You don't have to understand it, you don't have to have words from God to help it make sense to you. If you don't do this, you will die. If you do, you might live.

Exodus 12:12-13

“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn – both men and animals – and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am YHWH. ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

Let's see what happens. And so, on that day – chapter 12, verse 12 and 13 – “ ‘On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn – both men and animals – and I will bring judgment’ --- see, justice – “on all the gods of Egypt. I am YHWH. The blood will be a sign” – remember that – “The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. The destructive plague will not touch you when I strike Egypt.””

And so, what happens? The clock strikes midnight. You can just imagine this. Gong, gong, gong ... everyone's waiting. They did what they were told. What would that be like that night? Everyone wondering, *Did we do everything according to the instructions?* But even more, *Will it work?* Parents all around Egypt are screaming like they have never heard before. And the Israelis have put blood on the door and they've cooked that lamb and they had the herbs and they ate the bread. But will that be enough to stop this from happening? Maybe even the outside doors rattle a little bit.

Think about this. Who in the room is a firstborn male? Just raise your hand. Who's a firstborn male in your family? Do some of your ladies have a firstborn brother? Is your father a firstborn male? Because if his life was taken, you wouldn't exist. Firstborn males --- everyone's wondering if they're going to be part of this justice. And in Israel not a dog moved, not even whimpered. So, the men were holding the wives, the wives were holding their sons, the sons were holding their sisters, and everybody's waiting.

Exodus 12:29-30

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well.

³⁰ Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

Here's what happens in the story, Exodus 12:29 says this: "At midnight YHWH struck down all the firstborn of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. Pharaoh and all of his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was a loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone who was dead."

It Worked!! But Why?

But in Israel, it worked. It worked. Everywhere anyone, even Egyptian families, if they took that blood, if they did what Moses told them to do and they found out through a friend, maybe, to wipe that blood on that doorjamb and eat that meal the way they were supposed to, the Lord's judgment passed over them and they did not experience that.

When that night had come to fruition, Pharaoh and his officials called Moses and Aaron in and said, *Get out. We're done. You win. Could you please bless me before you go? Could you have YHWH bless me?* That's how that story ends.

We look back at this event and we think, *Well, sure, of course.* But when you read the story, you have to keep in mind that this is the first time it's happened. Why? Not just how did this work, but why did this work? Why these somewhat strange rituals to fight off this plague? And I would even say that this plague is not like the other plagues. It's not really like a plague. Because those other plagues, like traditional plagues, are acts of nature, some kind of violent act of nature that's taking place. And many of the nine plagues were that way. This plague is an outside agent from God that's called sometimes in some translations "the destroyer", sometimes "the death angel." And without noise or effort, whatever it touches, it kills. It just destroys them.

Again, look at the storyline – take a lamb, a one-year-old lamb. That will keep you safe.

I looked up on Google – what are the most popular names for lambs? They're Snowy, Daisy, and Snowball. So, the destroyer is coming, the death angel. *That's okay – we've got Snowball. Come on, Snowball.* I mean, that's like trying to alter the direction of a hurricane with a feather duster. I got this. This is going to work just fine.

The reason this happening and the why of this ritual called Passover is because this is early in the story of human salvation, and in this we're learning the fundamentals of spiritual truths. This story is teaching us in a visual way the physics of our soul. It is vivid. It is a vivid description of the economy of sin. That's what this lesson is trying to teach us. These are the spiritual laws of life. And here they are.

1. Sin Costs Death

One, sin costs death. Now not all sins are equal, but any sin has a price tag attached to it. And that is death. And it's sometimes hard for us to grasp that because we're living here in this place that is saturated by sin. And we're always thinking relative sin, and we're not as bad.

But I love C. S. Lewis' book *The Great Divorce*, because he takes a little day trip to heaven. And in that experience, he gets to see what it's like to be in a place of absolute perfection, of holiness, of purity. And it's not deluded in any way. And so, in his fallen state, he gets to take a day trip there. And he finds that the air that he breathes is holiness. And while it's sweet to those who can live there, to him it is harsh and causing burning in his throat and lungs. The things that he sees, he's been told, in colors that are unimaginable and in a state of vividness that is inexplicable --- but to him it's black and white. It's kind of hazy. His view is not what others, unfallen people's, view is.

And the food, the meal, that meal – that's a special meal with the King. Everyone that belongs in heaven gets to enjoy the fullness of the taste and the smell. But to him, in a fallen state, it is like gargling acid. He can't tolerate it. And while he tries to take a fading glance at the reflection of God Almighty, he fears that it could evaporate him. And those that are citizens of heaven can gaze at their king without even blinking.

And he finds that this is no place for him. And he longs to go back to earth. And on earth he realizes that his petty sins that he considered petty before, and how about the real sin of pride, now he sees it in contrast to what it ought to be and realizes, yes, sin deserves death.

The closer we approach the holiness of God, the more we realize the debt we owe. And that debt is death.

2. Justice Is Certain

Part one is sin costs death. And the second lesson of the physics of the spiritual world is that justice is certain. God has to be just. He's required to be just because He's God. He's required to be just because the love of God compels Him to be just. He cannot be a loving God unless He is fair, unless He makes this justice true.

3. Blood Satisfies Justice

Now in this story particularly, we find out this thing that we wouldn't know of otherwise. And that is that blood satisfies justice. That's the whole point, that blood satisfies justice. The plague of justice is going from door to door. And remember He said to put the blood on the doorjamb and that will be a sign. What does the sign say to the destroyer, the angel of death? What is it saying? It says that a life has already been taken here. This debt has already been paid. There's been a substitution made. Pass on. Keep moving. It's taken care of.

It's not because the people were good, mind you. It's because there was a substitute that was used and that lamb was slaughtered so that they wouldn't have to be. It's not about being good. It's about paying the debt.

4. Pointing to Something More

Sin costs death. Justice is certain and blood satisfies this justice. And what this is showing us, this storyline, is that it's pointing to something more. Because God institutes this ritual that takes place every year, the Passover, and the point of the Passover is every year they practice this because every year they have to be reminded that if this one-year-old innocent lamb doesn't die, then we will. But they have to keep repeating it. Because a lamb can't cover the sins of a man. They're going to need a better lamb. They're going to need The Lamb. And no less than thirty times is Jesus the Messiah in the New Testament called the Lamb of God.

He's called the Lamb of God because He is the lamb that is pictured in this story that we've been reading together -- the story of Passover. If you look at Jesus' life and particularly His death, in the Passover we have the blood. It's on the two sides and over the door posts and more than likely that blood dripped down and there was some at the bottom. His crucifixion has blood on each side, a crown of thorns at the top, and His pierced feet at the bottom. He's that lamb, taken in the prime of His life, without sin or blemish or spot. And not a bone was broken.

Remember the Roman guards wanted to break one of the bones? No, no, no, He has to be whole, just like the Passover lamb was. That's why John the Baptist, the last Old Testament prophet, introduces Jesus as, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

He who has no sin became sin on our behalf, so that we might have the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That's the substitute. That's the story.

5. You Must Choose, by Faith, a Sin Covering

But while we understand these four principles, the fifth one is most important. You must choose by faith to trust that Jesus' blood satisfies justice. You have to believe that His death and resurrection is proof that all your debt to the Father is paid – all of it, completely. You have to choose.

Look, let's go back to the story itself. If you were informed by Moses that you had to take that lamb and cut the lamb and put the blood on the door, the bitter herbs, eat the unleavened bread, pack like you're going to run --- you knew all those things --- maybe you'd teach a class on it. Maybe you'd become an expert at it. Yeah, that's it. You have a PhD in all things Passover. But you don't do it. If you don't do it, you die. You have to choose to act on what was clearly an expression of faith in that first event. *I don't understand how it works, I don't see that it could work, but I will do that. I will put all of my faith in this lamb, posting a sign so the death angel of justice will pass.* Right. You have to put your faith there.

A lover says, "I love you. Will you marry me?" You have to answer. You have to stand before friends and family and say your vows to enter that covenant. You have to do something.

The story of the Bible, we're going to see, is a story of thousands of years of a lover pursuing His beloved. God loves you. He's asking you, *Will you marry me?* You have to answer. You have to choose. Jesus says, "I stand at the door and knock. Whoever opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him." Knock, knock. You have to answer the door. You have to let Him in.

If you've never done that or maybe you haven't fully appreciated what is taking place in the spiritual world so that you didn't understand the physics or the economy of your soul and sin, today you could do that. Today you could decide that this is the day. *I'm not hoping in good works, I'm not putting faith in my chivalry. I give up on that. I need a substitute. I need grace to transform my soul -- the death of the Lamb of God, the resurrection that proved that He is the lion that was promised.* That's what the invitation and the application is for today, at least right now. If you've never done that, do it today. In these strange circumstances, why not? Why not?

Communion

Jesus is the Passover lamb. It's so obvious that in the last Passover, Jesus is leading the Passover. And He takes the bread and He says --- no, no, no, this unleavened bread that over the years becomes symbolic of being without sin --- this bread without sin – He says, “I am this bread. This is my body. And this will be broken for you so that you don't have to be.” *It is a physical, visual expression of what takes place to your soul. And I will be going through that, my soul will be going through that, but you don't have to. Take this, all of you, and eat it.* He did that that night.

I'm going to do that. Take that if you're in your room right now.

And we can pray with gratitude. *Lord Jesus, we are grateful that You died so that we wouldn't have to. You lived the perfect life because we couldn't. And now we receive that as a gift and let Your blood be on the doorframe of our soul so that justice passes over and finds You on that cross. We are grateful, Lord. In Jesus' name.*

Later on He took the cup and He said, “I'm making a new covenant.” We'll learn more about the old covenant next week. He says, “Now this is the new covenant. And this blood is that blood that will be shed – everlasting, unrelenting, immutable, unchangeable covenant of grace.” He said, “Take this.” So, let's do that.

Many of you know the outline of the Lord's table, the Passover that He's taken over, and He said, *No, this has all been leading up to me. I'm the Lamb of God.* You've probably heard it. You might have read it, multiple times. It's in two or three places in the Bible. Do you notice what's missing in this meal, in the story of the meal? There's no story of lamb. He never holds up the lamb because He is the lamb. He doesn't talk about this clue, this mammal with four legs. It doesn't come up in the Passover meal at the Lord's table because the lamb is there. The fulfillment of all those years – that's what the story is about.

The Lord's table – He says, “Do this. And whenever you break this bread and drink this cup, do this in memory, in remembrance, of me until I come in glory.” And so, the Lord's table, the communion table, is a beautiful expression of the Passover where it focuses on the past, the Passover itself; on the present, where we are right now, living by faith that Jesus' blood that's wiped on our doorframe is adequate to satisfy the justice of God; and then future, the future

banquet, that meal that we'll have with the King. That's what this does. And so, we're to practice this regularly so that we might be reminded that our faith is in that Lamb of God.

Exodus 13: Israel Consecrates Their Firstborn Males

That's the story of the Exodus and that's where many people shut the book and say, *We're done*. But the Exodus continues. In Exodus chapter 13 all of Israel is pushed out of Egypt with their wallets full of Egyptian gold and silver. And when they get just outside the city limits, Moses stops everyone and they have a dedication service.

Exodus 13:1

The LORD said to Moses, "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal."

Look what it says in Exodus chapter 13 in the very first verse: "And YHWH said to Moses, 'Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal.'"

Do you see what He's done? As soon as he gets safe, right outside the city limits, he says, *Okay, let's stop. All the firstborn males, all of them, the cows, the sheep, the goats, the humans -- you come up here*. And they consecrate them, which meant all the mammals died. They gave them up as sacrifices. And then they turn to the humans and say, *Why are you alive? How come you're even here?* It makes them stop and pause. And the idea here is that this belongs to me. This all belongs to me. And from that point on, every firstborn in any context of livestock and the firstborn males were dedicated to the Lord. He owns them. *I am the Father of the firstborn*.

And one of the things that happens in a person's life when they experience -- this is like a near-death experience -- they go through this last plague, this tenth plague, they get out of town -- We made it. And then they stop and ponder, *Why, why did I get to live?* Right? People with near-death experiences, and we'll see more about that as the campaign starts throughout the city of Austin --- many of you have had that experience. Some of you know people who have nearly lost their life and come back from death.

They share at least three positive attributes when they come through that. One is humility. When a person dies or should have died in some event and they've got enough time to pause and think about that, they come back and they say, *You know what? I'm so grateful to be here*. Sometimes they have guilt. It's called survivor's guilt. It's way past "I feel lucky." It's this feeling of destiny. *I must have been saved for a purpose*. And so, they just have an attitude of humility that sometimes can't happen until that close call.

The second attribute of people that are outside the city limits that are standing in front of Moses saying, "Why should I be here?" or other people that understand that they should have died on the cross is their generosity. Now they have a whole different way of keeping score. It's not about collecting, it's about giving. It's not about getting, it's about distributing. With everything. Some things that were once precious to them – *Oh, you can have this. No, no, I don't care about that sort of thing anymore*. They give of themselves. They give their time, they give their energy and their talents, they're generous with that; they give their resources. They want to share because they realize that this life is so brief and everything from that day when they were supposed to lose their life on, that's just borrowed time. And they don't need to collect; they need to distribute.

So, it's not just humility and generosity, but the third attribute of people that know where they should have been but God's grace saved them, is gratitude. They are thankful for everything. Sunrises change; the baby that giggles; all things around them. They find themselves chasing butterflies that they considered a nuisance before.

In the Bible from pretty much the beginning to the end, a symptom of a sick soul is ingratitude. "And they did not give thanks ..." And the Bible also says the sign of a healthy soul, if you take the temperature of a person that understands that they are saved by grace, that they have been passed over because there's been a substitute – those people are overwhelmed. They are thankful. They are grateful. They are humble. And they are generous.

So, they're the walking dead. They should have died but they lived. And in the context of our culture right now, let's be a church that does that, that has these attributes of humility and generosity and gratitude. And let's make sure it smells sweet enough for everyone around us to enjoy it. And when they ask, be bold and courageous. Tell them why: that you were bought with a price and it's no longer you who live, but Christ that lives within you.

Another passage says, “Therefore honor God with your body. You’ve been bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” You’ve been bought with a price. Do not become slaves to men. We have that freedom. We’ve been passed over.

Let’s pray in gratitude and humility and generosity for what God has given to us as we experience the Passover.

Lord, we are grateful. We are humbled. And Lord, I’d ask that we would be generous as well, that we would find ourselves in that desert, a firstborn wondering, Why did I survive? Oh, that’s right – the Lamb of God lost His life, gave His life so that I might live. Lord, I’d ask that this church, as we are in this very unusual set of circumstances, could bring those attributes of being born again into every relationship that we encounter. Would You help us do that? Would You give us time in the morning, in the midday, in the evening, to reflect and to regenerate on the truths that we heard today? That we would see people as spiritual beings, desperately, some of them, in fear? That we might bring the peace of Jesus Christ, not of this world, but the peace that transcends all comprehension, into those people’s lives, that we might bless them.

Lord, I’d ask that a wonderful revival could take place across our country, across our globe, because people are realizing their frailty. Let the Church rise up to this occasion. Let’s be part of that revival. God bless our church. Bless our lives, that we might give back and glorify You. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.