

Forged VI: The Great Escape

Palm Sunday, Communion

Faith Center, Eureka

Pastor Matt Messner

March 31/April 1, 2012

Introduction

There is young woman named Shobha. She lives in India. She has dreadlocks and a red and white beaded necklace which are trademarks of who she is. -- She is a *devadasi*, or a “servant of god”. She was dedicated to the goddess Yellamma when she was 10. It was an economic decision made by her parents. She cannot marry a mortal. When she reached puberty, the devadasi tradition dictated that her virginity was sold to the highest bidder. In this case it was her distant relative.

When she was 14 she became pregnant and was sent to work in the red light district in Mumbai. “I just wanted to kill myself – I planned to climb to the roof of the brothel and throw myself off but the thought of leaving my family destitute prevented me,”

Now 26 and diagnosed with AIDS, she has returned to her village, weak and unable to work.

"We are a cursed community. Men use us and throw us away," she says. Applying talcum powder to her daughter's face and tying ribbons to her hair, she says: "I am going to die soon and then who will look after her?" The daughter of a devadasi, Shobha plans to dedicate her own daughter to Yellamma, continuing the generations of slavery and abuse.

In January nearly half a million people attend a festival in the small town of Saundatti, to be blessed by Yellamma, the Hindu goddess of fertility. The streets leading to the temple are lined with shops selling sacred paraphernalia – glass bangles, garlands, coconuts and heaped red and yellow dye that devotees smear on their foreheads. This annual event is a pilgrimage for the devadasi and the enslavement and exploitation day for new members.

Girls from poor families of the "untouchable", or lower, caste are "married" to Yellamma as young as four. No longer allowed to marry a mortal, they are expected to bestow their entire lives to the service of the goddess as prostitutes.

There is a Foursquare church in that town. For the last couple of years the pastor has conducted outreaches during this festival.

It is during this year's outreach that Shobha hears the gospel of Jesus Christ for the first time. A God who loves her? A God who has a future for both her and her daughter? A God who can bring her out of slavery? She cries out "Hosanna!" – God help me! God save me! She makes a change. Leaving slavery isn't going to be easy.

She courageously prays and begins a new life.

Our God sets slaves free. He sets us free. Today, in the Exodus story, we see the Hebrews, who had been crying out "Hosanna" for a long time, now being freed from their slavery. Their freedom from slavery reflects the freedom that Jesus is advancing in our individual lives.

I. 11:1-3 (Here is what I am going to do!)

¹ Now the LORD had said to Moses, "I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely. ² Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold." ³ (The LORD made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people.)

The hammer of God's anvil had been pounding away at the hard heart of Pharaoh. Patiently and persistently this had gone on and on. Pharaoh had resisted and refused to let the Hebrews go. He had been given many chances and had continued to harden his heart.

Now there is going to be one more plague, and then, freedom would come.

This is what they have been waiting for. Pharaoh had resisted and refused to let the Hebrews go. He had been given many chances and had continued to harden his heart.

But not all of Egypt was hard hearted. Many of the Egyptians were sick of Pharaoh. They were sick of the frogs and the flies and the locust and the bad drinking water and they were sick of seeing the injustices done to their neighbors. Their hearts were turning towards Moses, the Hebrews and towards their God.

God says, "Take up an offering from your Egyptian neighbors. Ask them for your wages. They

will pay you. Pay day has come. You're going to need it once you leave town."

From this story I see that God is concerned for me now, but He also is thinking of my future. Wisdom sees ahead. God is building a foundation for my future, and it depends on my current decisions and actions.

- Like the Hebrew slaves, we are told to have a "good reputation with outsiders" – You never know from whom God's blessings will come. 1 Timothy 3:7 An elder must have a **good reputation with outsiders**, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap
- Luke 2:52 ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor (grace) with God and man.

How was this possible? The relationship between Jesus and the Father was dynamic. He wasn't like a 2000 year old child. I sometimes think of Him in that way. He was God's beloved son. And he grew up. And as He grew up there was a growing favor that was evident to all who knew Him. He had favor (grace) from God and from man.

Speaks of a progression and growth of life that the Son of God experienced.

I have a future freedom that is greater than my present freedom

II. 12:1-5 (Here is what you're to do in the future!)

¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ² "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. ⁴ If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. ⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. ⁶ Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.

This chapter continues to describe the Passover meal and how it was to be observed.

It didn't matter what job you had – whether you were an accountant or a carpenter. You were going to the fair and you were going to become a livestock owner. You did this every year. You

were to find a really good lamb. Your children might want to help you with you purchase, so you go and your bring the lamb home.

For four days you have a new pet.



You try to be positive about the upcoming feast, but killing sheep and goats is not a job that every family is going to enjoy.

Growing up we had goats. We used them for milk and we used them to clear brush. And they added some excitement to our lives...my grandfather's "chariot"...our baby.

As you can imagine, this would have been difficult. This wouldn't have been a normal practice for most of these families. I can imagine the father explaining to his firstborn son: "If we don't do this, you will die."

A couple observations:

God's intent is that the home be the center of spiritual life. The family did this. It was usually the father. No priest was present. There were no priests. There was no sacrificial system. It was up to the families. They were supposed to look out for their neighbors as well. Community was very important. Nobody was supposed to miss out on this. The father took aside the lamb. Some of the children would have wanted to watch. Others, would hide. And with faith confession, fear and trust, he killed the lamb. He then went to the doorframe of his home and applied the blood, applying it to the top of the doorframes and to the sides. He prepared the

meal, carefully following God's instructions. Someone had to die so that they would have life.

Today, our homes are to be our places of worship. Our places of prayer. Our places of devotion and Christian living and love. The home is where our faith is lived out. God has selected the home to be as sacred (more sacred?) a place as a church building. If you don't have a home it can be your room or bunk.

Why did God ask them to do this year after year?

God didn't want them to ever forget that they had once been slaves.

God didn't want them to forget their "bitter" suffering.

God didn't want them to ever forget that they had been set free.

God didn't want them to ever forget that they had been saved from death.

God didn't want them to ever forget that one had to die so that they might have life.
(Substitution)

Was this only important for the Israelites? Or does this apply to us?

Remember that you were once a slave.

Remember what it was like to be miraculously set free.

Remember that you have been saved from death.

Remember that one died, so that you might live.

As free slaves, we remember the day of our freedom.

III. 12:21-23, 29-39 (The event itself)

²¹ Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. ²² Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. ²³ When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will **pass over** that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.... ²⁹ 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. ³¹ During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. ³² Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.”

³³ The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. “For otherwise,” they said, “we will all die!” ³⁴ So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. ³⁵ The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. ³⁶ The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.

³⁷ The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Sukkoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. ³⁸ **Many other people went up with them,** and also large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds. ³⁹ With the dough the Israelites had brought from Egypt, they baked loaves of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves.

It was a tragic night. It felt strange for the Hebrews to be walking away in haste with wealth that they had never had before.

Walking away they heard the crying. Their heart went out to their Egyptian neighbors.

- They realized that this situation was the result of Pharaoh’s choices. His decisions led to this. And after generations of Hebrews had been deprived of every human right, now, the table had turned.
- Every house experienced death. The same is true of us. We have all suffered the loss of family and friends. This is a part of life. You and I remember the sad news when we received the call late at night that death had come. The difference though, is that there is eternal hope and an entirely different view of death wherever the blood of the lamb is applied.
- One day Jesus would also die, innocent as God’s firstborn son. Who killed Him? I did. He died for me. He did it because of my sins and my choices. When confronted with this fact, I find myself in the position of Pharaoh and Jesus being the son who is struck down. My choices (our choices) led to the death of God’s son.
- The death of the firstborn is the Gospel, before the Gospel. It is a foreshadowing of the coming redemption. God gave His 1st born in order to purchase the freedom of all.

Our freedom is costly

Yes, the freedom of the slaves was to be celebrated. But there was also a somber tone to the Exodus.

They ran into their freedom with their unfinished bread on their shoulders.

- **As we run into freedom, leave behind the yeast/sin**

- **Bring along as many others as you can Many other people went up with them.** Who were these people? Were there Egyptians who decided to tag along? Probably.

IV. **Why this story is so significant:**

So, as the story goes, they run. And Pharaoh's armies chase them. He starts worrying about his workforce so he chases them to his own destruction.

Skipping forward to the last week of the life of Jesus, He arrives in Jerusalem for the last week of his life. We call this The Triumphal Entry. People welcome him openly. Like the year old lamb, days later, he will be killed for their sins. He will be killed so that they (we) will have the option of life.

We have a meal that we observe that focuses on THAT lamb. We observe this meal every month as a church, although there are no limits to how often we can do this. We approach Jesus with the same attitude, humility and faith as a father preparing the Passover lamb.

1 Cor. 5:6-8 ⁶ Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? ⁷ Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

- Get rid of the yeast (sin) (It is alive and multiplies)
- Celebrate the lamb (I didn't set myself free. He died in my place. He came as my substitute.)
- Run for freedom

I was once a slave. My freedom was costly. I will not forget.

I am not free to live in sin; I'm growing into a greater freedom from sin.

Conclude with **Communion**

Jesus established in this place, "The Lord's Supper" --- Remember Me.

Rev. 5:12-14

Announce: The Day of Freedom