

# The Threat of Life (lesson #4)

## Power and Weakness

Reading Exodus 11:4-8 & 12:28-32

What a great narration in the Word that models the story of faith and freedom.

### The story is really an unequal one (11:4-8)

- A. Israel is powerless
  - They are pitiful slaves who are led by Moses
- 1. Yet the stories we have read in Genesis (from Abraham to Joseph) speak about a people who had been given a blessing by God
- 2. A blessing which was the power for their life from generation to generation
- 3. By the time we get to our story here in Exodus, Israel has been completely robbed of its strength and reduced to nothing more than pitiful helpless slaves
- B. On the other hand we see Pharaoh, mighty Egypt as a dominant power (superpower!)
  - 1. Throughout Exodus we see Pharaoh and his might in complete control
    - Threatening, exploiting, intimidating, using and abusing Israel.
  - 2. While Israel has been hit by the short end of Pharaoh's stick
  - 3. Israel had certainly longed to escape, but Pharaoh is determined to not lose his cheap labor

### There is no doubt who's in control here.

- A. Pharaoh will dominate/ Israel will submit!
- B. But... Notice what Moses does here
  - 1. Ex. 11:4-8 Moses makes this incredible assertion that reverses the whole notion of power and who's in control
  - 2. Moses announces to Pharaoh that at midnight (in the darkness) Yahweh— this untamed, undomesticated character in the story of Israel's existence is going to make a devastating entry into the unfolding drama.
  - 3. Moses tells Pharaoh that in the darkness of midnight Yahweh will come against his power.
    - Yahweh will kill and destroy all the firstborn causing great grief (unlike any they have ever had or heard)
    - Moses doesn't end it here, he goes on to say that while all of this unfolds, Israel (vulnerable Israel) will be asleep in their slave huts and will remain untouched and undisturbed.
  - 4. Moses makes it clear that the God that Pharaoh has dismissed as irrelevant will become very relevant to Pharaoh

### Who has the control now?

- A. **Ex. 12:28-32** see that the events had occurred just as Moses had announced in chapter 11.

#### At Midnight

- ...The Lord struck down the first born of the empire!
  - While Israel slept peacefully
- ...The Lord's mysterious power of His holiness intruded into the struggle.
- ...The Lord's power that arrived at midnight is beyond both the understanding and the control of Pharaoh.
- ...the Lord's power is beyond the expectation of Israel as well.

#### What Pharaoh learned

- ...He was not in control
- ...That he had met more than his match in Yahweh
- ...Was his own helplessness before the power of God

#### Pharaoh's response:

- ...Rise, go worship (Take your flocks and your herds and be gone)

**But notice his last stunning imperative:**

...The superpower speaks to truth

...And Pharaoh says to Moses— Bless me, be a blessing to me as well.

1. This is a picture of power before weakness
2. A picture of a nobody Moses and a nobody nation (Israel)

B. Who would have ever thought that in the slave huts would dwell the promises of God!

1. This Pharaoh who seems to have everything his way comes at midnight to this Moses

- Bless me
- Give me life
- Do for me whatever I can't do for myself

**There's a uniqueness to this story of Moses, Israel and Pharaoh**

A. As you hear this insightful story of Pharaoh's astonishing midnight you have a choice as to where you enter the story.

1. You can be the small weak person we see in Moses who turns out to be the carrier of powerful blessings

- I believe that the Church may be just such a blessing

2. You can be (for a little while) that dominant power who is used to having it your own way.

- But life and time have a way of showing us where we're weak.

B. These passages this morning shatters the old maps of power and control

1. We know that the blessings of God are found in the life of Jesus

-The life that was wrapped up in powerlessness (**Matt. 27:39-43**)

*39Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 40and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" 41In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 42"He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, "I am the Son of God.'*

2. The picture of blessing is so clearly seen not only in the body of Jesus but also in His death!

-A dead Messiah!

-How scandalous

- Yet our faith is built on the scandal that the power of God will come to us in the powerlessness of Jesus in our midnight— in which we like Pharaoh say, bless me!
- The story of Pharaoh is the story of failed power
- The story of Moses is about unnoticed possibility
- And this story is played out in our lives

**What's your story this morning? (Where has God shown up in your midnight?)  
Where have you discovered like Moses, the unnoticed possibility of God in your own life?**

So what's your decision this morning?

- Where do you need to let go?
- What power are you living by this morning?

**Scot Poirier**

Minister

Chelmsford Church of Christ

205 North Rd.

Chelmsford, Massachusetts

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