

Text: Exodus 12:1-30

Title: “Are You Covered” Pt.1

Today we’re celebrating the second anniversary of the opening of our church’s free medical clinic called the Mercy Clinic. Our motivation for showing mercy is the mercy that God has shown to us in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross of Calvary for our sins. Open your Bibles to Exodus 12. We’re going spend the next three Sundays reflecting back on the amazing thing God did for us in the death and resurrection of His Son. But long before that God gave another powerful demonstration of His mercy; this time it was just for His chosen people, the nation of Israel. It is called the Passover and it happened after Israel had been in slavery in Egypt for hundreds of years. These are the people of God and He will set them on a journey to possess the Promised Land. But first they must be delivered. God will judge their captors, the Egyptians, with a series of plagues, the last of which is more grave than we might could comprehend ... the death of the firstborn sons throughout the land. But Israel will be spared because they will be covered with God’s special protection. This week and next week we will look through the lens of this historic event, the Passover, in order to better understand that greatest event in history ... the death and resurrection of Jesus. Read Exodus 12:1-13.

GREAT ROOM ILLUSTRATION – Sometimes it’s helpful to see things visually that we read in the Bible. Here’s how the animated film “Prince of Egypt” captures this scene from the Bible.

You see, there is a “red thread,” a trail of blood, that runs all the way through the Bible. It starts in the book of Genesis where Adam and Eve first sinned against God. God immediately implemented the plan of action to redeem those who had sinned. Out of all the nations on the earth God chose a small group of people that started from a man named Abraham. Ultimately they would become the nation of Israel. God would love and redeem Israel, even though they sinned and rebelled against Him. And God would use the redemption of Israel to demonstrate *to* the whole world what He intended to do *for* the whole world ... to offer redemption for those who would take their place under the covering of the blood of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 5:7b - Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

So one end of this “red thread” is tied to Adam and Eve in Genesis. The other end of the “red thread” is tied to Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection. And the “red thread” runs through this very important event we have here in Exodus 12.

So here’s what’s happening in this part of Exodus. Israel has been in Egypt for hundreds of years, but along comes an Egyptian king who is jealous and fearful of the Israelites. He forces them into slavery. But remember, these are God’s people and He has a plan for them. They are not to live in Egypt forever. Long before God promised to Abraham that they would possess a land called Canaan, the Promised Land. So the Israelites were destined for this, and no Pharaoh could stand in the way of God’s plans. So God raised up a man named Moses to deliver His people. When Moses went to the king and said “God said to let His people go,” the king refused. So God sent this series of plagues or judgments on Egypt.

There were ten of these plagues recorded in Exodus 7-12 ... the plague of blood in the water, the plague of the frogs, the plague of the gnats, the plague of the flies, the plague on the livestock, the plague of boils, the plague of hail, the plague of locusts, the plague of darkness and the last plague ... the plague of the death of the firstborn. It's important to see that what God is doing here is not just judging the sin of Pharaoh for not letting Israel go free. God was displaying His glory over the false gods of Egypt.

Exodus 12:12 - "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 the LORD.

Now this plague of judgment might offend our sensibilities. How could a loving God have anything to do with death? We must see that God is displaying His glory in at least two ways here. First, God is displaying His glory in His holiness. The Egyptians were an idolatrous people who refused to honor and obey the One True God. These judgments are to display the holiness of God and His wrath against sin. But these judgments display the glory of God in another way ... in His mercy and love. The only way to avoid this judgment was to be protected or covered from it. God displayed His glory in His mercy as He provided this covering for His people through the blood of a lamb ... the substitution of a life for a life.

What we have here is a powerful picture of God's deliverance and redemption of His people. First, God's deliverance ...

1. MARKS A NEW BEGINNING FOR HIS PEOPLE

Exodus 12:1-2 - The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.

Everything will be different for Israel after this. They would start their calendar over so that they would never forget what God did for them. It was a new beginning. But also on this incredible day, God established His people as a new community.

Exodus 12:3 - 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.

This is the first time in the Bible that Israel is called a "community," or "congregation." God is forming a nation ... a new people that is uniquely tied to proclaiming His glory among the nations everywhere they go.

ILLUSTRATION – In a few weeks Nan and I will celebrate our wedding anniversary. On April 8, 1977 everything changed for us on that day. We were no longer a single man and a single woman. We became a new family.

Today, when you receive God's deliverance through Jesus it's a new beginning for you because it's a new life. You get to start over. Everything is new. And not only that, but God puts you in a new

family, the church. You become part of a people whose purpose it is to display God's glory to the world.

Now this deliverance is available to all, but it isn't automatic. So God's deliverance ...

2. REQUIRES PERSONAL PREPARATION

You see, God has a plan for delivering His people. Everything is taken care of, but there are preparations that have to be made if a person was to be able to take advantage of His deliverance. The same thing is true in the deliverance that comes through Jesus. It is available to all, but it isn't automatic. We have to prepare to receive it.

So the first thing that happened was...

THE LAMB WAS SELECTED

Exodus 12:3 - 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.

The lamb was to be carefully watched and examined for four days. We'll see why in a second. The celebration of Passover was centered in homes. And v. 4 says if a family was small and not able to eat an entire animal, they would share the meal with another family nearby.

Exodus 12:5 - The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.

So each family must select an unblemished lamb or goat from their flocks. They were to watch it closely for four days to make sure it had no defects, no flaws. The animal was to be perfect ... not because they taste better than imperfect ones ... but because this animal was to be a sacrifice for the people in that household. And for the sacrifice to be acceptable, it must be perfect.

You know the Bible tells us that Jesus was the sinless, perfect sacrifice for our sins. That's why the sinless Son of God had to come to be our Savior. No one else could pay the price.

2 Corinthians 5:21 - God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

So the lamb was selected but next...

THE LAMB WAS SLAIN

Exodus 12:6 - Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.

Now the family had watched that innocent lamb for four days. Then in the evening the lamb was to be killed.

Remember what is about to happen. God is about to judge everyone in Egypt by taking the life of the firstborn in every family. He is a holy and just God who must punish sin. But He is also merciful and loving God who provides a way to escape through a sacrifice. And again, the connection with Jesus in the New Testament is unmistakable.

1 Corinthians 5:7b - Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Remember the “red thread” that runs through the Bible. At the first Passover at the Exodus there was one lamb sacrificed for the sins of a household. Later when God gave the Law through Moses, a sacrificial system was set up so that once a year one lamb was sacrificed for the sins of a nation. But all that pointed toward the day when God would have one last and final sacrifice made for the sins of men ... Jesus Christ ... the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world ... one Lamb for the sins of all the world.

1 John 2:2 (NIV) - He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Now back to Exodus.

Exodus 12:7 - Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

For the sacrifice to be effective the blood of that lamb had to be applied to the doorframe of the house. What would this accomplish? Look down to...

Exodus 12:13 - 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.

Note: The words “pass over” don’t just mean that God will overlook something or someone. The words have a different meaning. It’s not God just passively overlooking something; it is God actively covering or protecting something. It was not just that the Lord passed by the houses of the Israelites, but that He stood guard, protecting each household where the blood had been applied to the doorpost.

Some could have said, “Well, I just don’t know if God’s word is true. I think I’ll take my chances.” Others could say, “Well, I’m not so bad, surely I don’t deserve this kind of punishment. I’ll take my chances that everything will be OK.” Deliverance is available to all, but it’s not automatic. The blood of the lamb was to be applied, and in this way they took their place under the covering of God’s deliverance.

UMBRELLA ILLUSTRATION – It’s like you have someone offer you an umbrella in a rain storm. You have to step under the cover of the umbrella in order to be spared from the rain. The same thing is true of God’s deliverance. He provides it, but through repentance and faith we must step under the cover.

God's deliverance through Jesus Christ is available to all, but it's not automatic. Jesus died to make forgiveness possible. But it will only be real for you if you put your trust in Christ and step under the "umbrella" of His mercy. Have you done that? Let's pray.

The purpose of these weeks is to cause us to think back on the mercy that God has shown us in His Son Jesus Christ. Are you covered? As we sing about this mercy today, do you need to run for cover?