

"BE A HERO OF FAITH! "  
By Rom A. Pegram (2/14/18-Ash Wednesday)

Anyone here like the CBS show, *Survivor*? Have you heard about the next planned *Survivor* show?

- Six men will be dropped on an island with 1 car and four kids each, for 6 weeks.
- Each kid plays two sports and either takes music or dance lessons.
- There is no access to fast food.
- Each man must take care of his 4 kids, keep his assigned house clean, correct all homework, complete science projects, cook, do laundry, etc.
- The men only have access to television when the kids are asleep and all chores are done; there is only one TV between them, and there is no remote.
- The men must shave their legs and wear makeup daily, which they must apply themselves, either while driving or while making four lunches.
- They must attend weekly school meetings; clean up after their sick children at 3 AM; make an Indian hut model with six toothpicks, a tortilla, and one marker; and get a 4-year-old to eat a serving of peas.
- The kids vote them off the island, based on performance.
- The winner is the man left with enough energy to still give his wife some time at the end of the day...

Hey, men, when was the last time you recognized what it takes for your mate to survive each week? It is Valentine's Day, you know... There's an awful lot of truth that lies in the midst of this *fictional* story. In the weeks to come, we're going to be looking seriously at what it takes to be *more than survivors*, spiritually. And, fellas, the truth is that our wives may have a head start on many of us...

One of the most popular TV shows, for quite some time now, is CBS's *Survivor*. Many people have watched as the cast (or castaways) get voted off the island ... or the Australian outback—wherever they're at. It takes a lot out of a person to be on this show. This isn't *Wheel of Fortune* or *Jeopardy!* These men and women are *eating bugs*, *sleeping in the rain*, *pushing themselves to the limit*, physically and emotionally. On top of that, after building relationships as a team, every few days *they have to vote someone off* the island. And with that in mind, I want to remind you, folks ... we live on an island that is *not* our home. The Apostle Peter reminds us of this as he writes in 1 Peter 2:11,

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.”

And the Apostle Paul agrees, when he comments in Philippians 3:20,

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

***Part of the problem for followers of Jesus today is that we think we're home.***

**WE'RE NOT!** We are aliens, we are strangers, we are foreigners. When I was a kid, we used to sing as we rode along in the car, and my father would always sing his old Sunday School songs that he learned as a kid, like: "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through." *Now*, I know that that song is true!

Although we live on an island, we are not survivors in danger of being voted off of our island. *We are more than survivors!* After all, Jesus lost *his* life so that we might do more than survive. He died for us so we might learn to *thrive spiritually*.

Folks, *we are more than survivors!* We can learn to thrive spiritually ... but we need a teacher. And, we have one on this Ash Wednesday evening ... as we begin our season of Lent. He's very famous. He started out as a prince of Egypt. He moved to the desert and became a shepherd. He was called by God to deliver his people. Is that enough hints? Listen, as we hear a synopsis of his life story found in "The Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11 (vv. 24-28, NLT) ...

It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. <sup>25</sup> He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. <sup>26</sup> He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. <sup>27</sup> It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. <sup>28</sup> It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.

From this 'Readers' Digest' version of the Moses story, we learn through Moses that—as more than survivors—we need to *practice making soul-conscious choices*. We have the opportunity, in our lives, to live like residents of an earthly kingdom ... *or* make a better choice and receive a better reward.

It's easy to make *wrong* choices on this island we're on. Trust me; I know. Perhaps you've been there too, at some time in your life. It's true that some choices are fairly inconsequential. I'm not sure that it makes much difference to God whether you had Cap'n Crunch or Cheerios for breakfast this morning ... *or* whether you drive a Ford or a Chevy. (If you were Bruce Bintzler, it mattered...) But, friends, *there're some choices that have consequences for us!* Moses made some choices that were of *great* consequence ...didn't he? AND, because he made the *right* choices, he's now considered a HERO OF FAITH. Why?

**MOSES IS A HERO OF FAITH ... BECAUSE HE SAID 'NO' TO ROYALTY AND 'YES' TO SLAVERY.** Verse 25 tells us, "He preferred to suffer with God's people rather than to enjoy sin for a little while." You know the story: Moses was rescued as a baby by one of the Pharaoh's daughters (possibly the daughter of a concubine) and she decided to raise Moses as her own ... in the palace ... with a great education ... and with great respect. But, when the choice was *his*, he said 'no' to royalty and 'yes' to slavery!

Why did Moses do this? Because he *knew* what God would want of him—to *do the RIGHT thing, instead of the NICE thing!* Moses made a soul-conscious choice

based on the Kingdom of God, rather than on a kingdom of this world!

Among the least-known passengers who perished on the *Titanic* that tragic night in 1912 was a young thirty-something pastor from Great Britain. Reverend John Harper was on his way to America with his young daughter and niece. Harper had been invited to hold a series of meetings at Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. When disaster struck and the ship began to sink, all women and children were permitted a seat in one of the twenty-one lifeboats. So were men traveling alone with their offspring. But John Harper felt a check in his spirit. He placed his little girl and young niece safely in one of the lifeboats, but then remained on the doomed deck of that most famous ship. Harper, you see, made a choice to stay behind to witness to the passengers and crew that went down with the ship. For the sake of their souls and being true to what he felt in his soul was God's calling, he chose *certain death* for the chance to impact scores of lives with the simple message of salvation in Christ...

Yes, he was entitled to join the women and children and survive the nightmare. But, like the heroes of faith we read about in Hebrews 11, he made a soul-conscious choice based on the coming kingdom of God ... just like Moses did before him. Just like Moses, John Harper did the *right* thing, instead of the *nice* thing...

**MOSES IS A HERO OF FAITH ... BECAUSE HE SAID 'NO' TO PALACE LIFE AND 'YES' TO DESERT LIFE.** Again, Moses did the *right* thing, but not necessarily the *nice* thing—what was *nice* for his life!

Hebrews tells us that *by faith* Moses left Egypt. Here, you know the story, too. Moses saw one of the Hebrew slaves being mistreated and attacked the abuser. Did he have to flee? Probably not. After all, he was *royalty* ...

He may have thought he was fleeing, but with his leaving Egypt *there was much more going on*. With his *choice* to 'get out of town' that first time, God had prepared Moses to lead his people. Those forty years as a shepherd were Moses' years of basic training in wilderness survival. Here's something else, quickly ...

**MOSES IS A HERO OF FAITH ... BECAUSE HE SAID 'NO' TO PRIME RIB AND 'YES' TO MANNA.** Again, it's about making soul-conscious choices—doing the *right* thing...

Moses began his life with the best of food and all comfort. But he ended his life eating the simple food God provided six days each week for forty years! Think about it ...

Are we making the *right* choices in life, today, as opposed to the *nice* ones? If God is leading your life in a certain direction, will you follow?

Those who are more than survivors (spiritually) in this world are *those who are about*

*making 'soul-conscious' choices*—choices based on the Kingdom of God, instead of the kingdoms of this world.

Tonight, let me end with this encouragement. **Be a hero of faith like Moses and practice making soul-conscious choices.** How did Moses make these wise choices? How did he avoid spiritual danger and live for God? The answer is at the end of our text, in V. 26-27 - "... he kept his eyes on the future reward. ... he saw the invisible God, [and] refused to turn back."

Folks, **be a hero of faith like Moses and practice making soul-conscious choices...**

- Do you want to pursue the right rewards? *Choose to be like Moses; don't identify with the citizenship here in our "Egypt"; identify with God's family and kingdom...*
- Do you want to pursue the right rewards? *Choose to be like Moses; don't make this world your home, remember your citizenship in heaven...*
- Do you want to pursue the right rewards? *Choose to be like Moses; feast on God's provision, not the "food" of this culture...*

**Be a hero of faith like Moses and practice making soul-conscious choices.**

This is a very special time for us as a church. We have begun a series that will enable us to look in depth at eight key personalities in Scripture. The last and most important, of course, is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (during Holy Week). All of them though, like Moses in Egypt, were strangers in a strange land. Each had daily soul-conscious choices to make. This coming Sunday, we're going to look at Joseph far from *his* home in a culture that worshiped crocodiles and snakes. But every one of these men and women we're going to look at during this season of Lent was a spiritual survivor ... and then some. That's what I want us to be, too. I want you to know that I'm taking this series for Lent very seriously. I'm trusting that you will as well. It begins with today's truth that those who are 'more than survivors' practice making soul-conscious choices. Put that truth to work in your life in the days to come ... and Sunday, we'll add another truth to it! Again, folks, ***part of the problem for followers of Jesus today is that we think we're home. WE'RE NOT!*** We need help learning to be more than survivors—to learn to decide on the *right* thing, instead of the *nice* thing. Let this season of Lent begin to shape your life; allow God to work in and through these messages and the studies of the season to make you into what he's always known you can be!