

"KEEPING OUR EYES FIXED ON GOD!"  
by Rom A. Pegram - 4/12/20 (Easter)

Happy Easter, everyone! We're going to start today by having Jackie Scharfenberg share the resurrection part of the Easter story with us—what we celebrate today...

Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup> On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" <sup>4</sup> But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside. <sup>5</sup> When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, <sup>6</sup> but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body."  
– Mark 16:2-6c (NLT)

No, this is not the Easter we all imagined, but *it is Easter* and we will still celebrate the resurrection of Jesus! I can't help but think, as Jesus went through that first Holy Week, that—as a human being—it must've seemed like an impossible time. Jesus knew what was ahead. As a human being, he had to face the atrocities of this week—hard physically and emotionally and spiritually. I'm sure, as Jesus reflected on this, he was also recalling many of the stories of the faith—heroes of the faith who'd been through impossible times as well. *Moses* was likely one of those—a *real hero of the Jewish faith*, God having carried him through the impossible. Jesus knew that ... and was encouraged...

It strikes me, on *this* Easter morning, we find ourselves in a similar time—*what seems impossible from the perspective of humanity*. How in the world are we going to get through this pandemic we're currently in? How long must we be quarantined? What about our Easter gathering with family ... and that Easter ham?

Folks, you know ... and I know ... *the only way we're going to get through all of this successfully is ... by faith*—faith in a God who's not surprised at what's going on around us, faith in a God who's always been there, and faith in a God who'll carry us through this time, just like he did Moses ... and Jesus ... and others...

We begin a new series today called "**God Strategies ... for Difficult Times!**"—based on a work by Robert J. Morgan. For this entire series, our focus will be on the first few verses of Exodus, Chapter 14—the *story of Moses* ... and his life's crowning achievement—*helping free God's people from the Egyptians*; from this story, we'll learn some lessons that will help us through difficult days. *Just as Moses helped free God's people from bondage in Egypt, so too Jesus helped free God's people from bondage to sin*—a lot of parallels... Do you remember the Moses story? Go back and read Exodus, Chapter 14, and it'll refresh your memory; then, you'll be ready for the rest of this series. Today, though, let's begin here...

Then the LORD gave these instructions to Moses: <sup>2</sup> "Order the Israelites to turn back and camp by Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea. Camp there along the shore, across from Baal-zephon. <sup>3</sup> Then Pharaoh will think, 'The Israelites are confused. They are trapped in the wilderness!' <sup>4</sup> And once again I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he

will chase after you. I have planned this in order to display my glory through Pharaoh and his whole army. After this the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD!" So the Israelites camped there as they were told. – Exodus 14:1-4 (NLT)

Moses' story in Exodus could be summed up like this: **God will always make a way for his tired, yet trusting, children ... even if he must split the sea to do it!** Listen to these Bible verses that remind us of this truth:

- Isaiah 43:19 (KJV) tells us, "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? *I will even make a way* in the wilderness...."
- The Apostle Paul shares this truth: (Colossians 4:2-3, CEV): "When you pray, keep alert and be thankful. Be sure to pray that *God will make a way*...."
- Isaiah (11:15, NRSV) describes what God can do in this way: "And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt; and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching wind; and will split it into seven channels, and *make a way* to cross on foot...."
- Paul, again (1 Cor. 10:13, BECK), assures us of this: "You can trust God. He will not let you be tested more than you can stand. But when you are tested, he will also *make a way* out so that you can bear it."

**God will always *make a way* ... where there seems to be *no way*!** Isn't that how the song goes? In crossing the Red Sea, Moses learned *this life lesson* (and others) that took him through some very challenging times; and *those lessons are still good for us today!* So, what do we need to know about Moses' journey with the Israelites ... that will help us on our very challenging journey today? Here's Rule #1...

**RULE #1: GOD MEANS FOR YOU TO BE WHERE YOU ARE!** You know, folks, at times ... **life may seem like a cul-de-sac.** Have you ever felt that way—like your life just drove into a difficult circumstance and you're hemmed in, with no escape from your current situation? *I'm sure all of us feel a bit that way these days...*

Going along with this rule, there's a secret to being content wherever you are *in the moment*; did you know that? That secret's revealed in a poem from an unknown author. It's called ... **I Met God in the Morning**...

**I met God in the morning, when my day was at its best  
 And His presence came like sunrise, like a glory in my breast.  
 All day long the Presence lingered; All day long He stayed with me;  
 And we sailed in perfect calmness o'er a very troubled sea.  
 Other ships were blown and battered, other ships were sore distressed,  
 But the winds that seemed to drive them brought to us a peace and rest.  
 Then I thought of other mornings, with a keen remorse of mind.  
 When I too had loosed the moorings with the Presence left behind.  
 So, I think I know the secret, learned from many a troubled way;**

## You must seek Him in the morning if you want Him through the day.

Folks, it doesn't matter *where* you are ... or *what* you're going through. The way to contentment in any circumstance is to know ... *God is there with you*. GOD MEANS FOR YOU TO BE WHERE YOU ARE right now ... and you're not alone.

We have *some real human tendencies* that pop up at times like this, though (if any of these sound familiar)... Sometimes, we have **a tendency to WORRY**, don't we? But, is that what God wants during our difficult times?

Worry's been described as 'a small trickle of fear that meanders through the mind, cutting a channel into which all other thoughts go.' In other words, worry can absolutely consume our thought life! Many of us have been there, haven't we? The preacher, John R. Rice, once said, "Worry is putting question marks where God has put periods." Bishop Fulton J. Sheen called worry "...a form of atheism, for it betrays a lack of faith and trust in God." For some, worry comes as natural as breathing ... but why? Why is it so easy to worry? Well, in the Bible, we're likened to sheep, aren't we? Have you ever seen how easily sheep are spooked? They're fenced in and well-fed, so they really have very little to worry about; yet, in a moment's notice, they can bolt out of fear due to nothing more than a rabbit jumping through the grass. '*Not really a quality God admires in his sheep though*, is it? No matter what your circumstance, you need to remember ... **GOD MEANS FOR YOU TO BE WHERE YOU ARE!**

We also have **a tendency to ask 'why me?'** When we get there, we need to remember that God knows what He's doing and allows particular circumstances in our lives ... for good reason. 1 Peter 4:12 (NLT) reminds us, "Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you." If you find yourself in a difficult spot, remember: *you are there by God's appointment, in His keeping, under his training, and for His time*; as followers of Christ, *it's not about us...*

We also have **a tendency to make situations worse** by *not* following God's lead; in other words, **God may reveal to us OUR PART in the current situation**. Don't ever forget, though we may not go with God's PLAN A, *God sometimes uses a PLAN B to help us grow!* The truth is, sometimes God *needs* to reveal to us how we got where we're at; and then, we need to take responsibility for our part of that! And, yes, we need to always remember RULE #1: **GOD MEANS FOR US TO BE WHERE WE ARE**; even if we've forced God to a PLAN B, God can clearly show us what *we've* done ... and move us to a better day! Above all else, remember: **GOD MEANS FOR YOU TO BE WHERE YOU ARE!** NEXT:

**RULE #2: BE CONCERNED WITH GOD'S GLORY, NOT JUST YOUR RELIEF!** Life has a way of showing us the wisdom of the right question...

I had a seminary professor who once told the class that *having the right answer was not always preferable*; instead, he suggested life was really about *asking the right question*... Here are the questions we usually ask, in the midst of a tough situation:

“How did I get into this mess, and how can I get out?” “How quickly can I solve this problem?” “Why did this have to happen to me?”

But, is that right? Let me suggest, today, that there may be a better way: The next time you’re overwhelmed, instead of asking these questions, why not ask: “How can God be glorified in this situation?” Look at John 12:27-28a (NLT) for what Jesus did...

**“Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But this is the very reason I came! <sup>28</sup> Father, bring glory to your name.”**

Just like the disciples in hiding learned after Jesus’ resurrection, one’s perspective is entirely transformed when you find out what God’s up to. It’s like switching on the floodlights in a dark stadium! Asking the right question can *change your attitude!* And, if you’ve ever been in the midst of a tough situation, you already know that sometimes our attitudes *need* to be adjusted, which leads me to this: Life’s right questions can lead us to a new perspective. Life’s right questions & a new perspective ... leads us to a God who’s always faithful!

So, begin by asking the right questions! But allow the right question to lead you to Rule #2: **BE CONCERNED WITH GOD’S GLORY, NOT JUST YOUR RELIEF!** Again, as Christ-followers, we need to know *LIFE IS NOT ABOUT US!* It’s about something much bigger...

Psalm 34:19 (NLT) promises us: “The righteous person faces many troubles, but the LORD comes to the rescue each time.” *Don’t ever forget that promise!* Instead of asking, “How did I get here?” or “How can I get out of this mess?” perhaps we *should* ask, “How can God be glorified in the situation I’m in?” ... knowing we’re RIGHT WHERE GOD WANTS US and GOD WILL RESCUE US. Let’s PUT GOD FIRST in our lives in these ways ... *believing God will always be there to deliver us from whatever trouble we’re going through.*

Do you want to know GOD’S PEACE in the midst of life’s storms? This is how ... and we’ll learn more about that next week...