

Sermon prepared on Exodus 9:13-16 by Jonathan Shradar

It is good to know why you exist, it helps us make sense of our days, our pursuits and our participation. It is important for churches to understand and equally so for individuals.

Our reason for existing will shape how we live. The choices we make and the things we invest in. *Being epic!* Achieving this standard of life... and we spend a lot of life trying to figure it out. Maybe you are in that process now.

This last week a good friend was thinking through a new job opportunity that would require relocation - It was to a place he and his wife desire to go but they wanted to make sure it matched their **ambition**, their purpose. They had to get away to answer the question, why do we exist?

What is our ultimate purpose?

It is this question that we encounter in the story of Exodus this week. Why do we exist.

We exist to glorify God.

Exodus 9:13-16 “Then the LORD said to Moses, “Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him, “Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, “Let my people go, that they may serve me. [14] For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. [15] For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. [16] But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.” (ESV)

We exist to glorify God.

Our text lands us in the middle of miraculous plagues, God dramatically changing circumstances to bring his people out of slavery in Egypt. The Israelites had been in Egypt for some four hundred years and had become slave labor, working to build the cities of Pharaoh, burdened, hated, hurting.

God hears their cries for relief and he remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He has come to bring his people out of the land of oppression and into the land of promised favor and abundance.

God recruits a mediator, Moses, to speak the words of God to the people and to the seat of power in Egypt. God commits to be with him, to give him the words to speak and to empower even his mouth to say them. He also sends Aaron, the brother of Moses, to assist in the exit from slavery.

They take this message to the elders and to the people and they rejoice. But when they go to Pharaoh and announce that God says to “let my people go!” they are met with resistance, even rejection to the point of harsher treatment and increased burden. In response to lament, God reminds his prophet that it will be by God’s strong hand that the people will come out. And they return to Pharaoh with the same message and miraculous signs begin.

The water of the Nile is turned to blood, and a cycle of being struck, petition for relenting and hardening of Pharaoh's heart ensues. There will be ten plagues in total, three groups of three in increasing devastation, from annoying to deadly, and then a final, ultimate plague will come. The blood followed by frogs, gnats, flies, livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness and then the passover.

We enter into the story at the announcement of the seventh plague, a storm of lightning and hail that will bring destruction and death. And in it we hear the reason for the plagues and even the reason for Pharaoh’s existence and we can see how that purpose applies to us even today and how we can respond to it.

1) Purpose of the Plagues

Growing up watching Charlton Heston play Moses in the Ten Commandments, and hearing the story of the exodus in Sunday school, I always viewed the plagues as tools of negotiation with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. As if he was the one that needed to be convinced, to have his mind changed by harsh events so that he would let the people go.

But here we have the clear declaration of their purpose and even why Pharaoh has become king - to show God’s power, that his name would be proclaimed in all the earth.

We have to understand who is receiving this message. To Egyptians, Pharaoh is a god. Divine, powerful and above all. You can imagine the posturing of Pharaoh and rejection of the God of the people he is enslaving. “What power do you have over Pharaoh?!” It is all a set-up, by the true God, to establish himself above all.

‘I will send all my plagues against you - the full weight of them, these miraculous events controlling nature - So that you will know there is no one like me on the whole earth.’

So that you may know the earth belongs to the God.

These plagues are showing Pharaoh, all of Egypt and even us, that God is omnipotent, that he has unlimited power. God is not displaying his power to change Pharaoh’s mind about letting the people go, he is displaying his power so that it will be known. To be glorified, to be exalted above all other gods, to be worshiped as supreme. For humanity to acknowledge his glory and value it over everything else.

He could have sent just one plague and Pharaoh and his people would have been obliterated from the earth.

But for this reason Pharaoh exists, to make Yahweh's name known, that his power would be revealed and everyone would hear about it. Even in our recounting of this story today, we are playing into the purpose of the plagues - witnessing God's power - his authority over all things.

The message is that Pharaoh, Egypt, the Israelites, all exist to glorify God. This was of course a shock to Pharaoh, he probably had defined his own purpose, based off of his abilities and his credentials, but his life, he has been raised up for this reason, the renown of God.

The reality is that this purpose is not only for Pharaoh, for the plagues in Egypt. All things, on earth and in the universe, all people exist for this!

Psalms 66:1-4 "Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! [3] Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. [4] All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name." Selah (ESV)

Habakkuk 2:14 "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (ESV)

Isaiah 45:23 "To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance."

We, like Pharaoh, exist for this purpose.

Not only is this purpose of glory for all, it is the measure by which we are positioned to experience the promise of God...

Numbers 14:21-23 "But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, [22] none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, [23] shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it." (ESV)

2) Response to Glory

Pharaoh, this is why you live, why you reign, why you are experiencing these plagues, to show God's power and to make his name known. Yet "**Exodus 9:17** "You are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go." (ESV)

Judgment will come. Pharaoh, made to glorify God, responds to the glory of God with **rejection**. Denial of it, a refusal to admit there is One higher than the throne he sits on.

It will be the demise of Pharaoh... the unrelenting weight of the plagues is coming, his own house will be feel the pain of refusing to submit to God's glory, his authority, his power.

As the people come out (14:4) "Then I will receive glory by means of Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD..."

Rejection is not the only option though. Some will embrace this glory of God, they will witness it and **submit** to it. Recognition of it. A mixed multitude, a crowd of people, Egyptian, will go out with Israel to worship God.

The purpose of his glory doesn't end though with the exodus. It remains, it persists, in every miracle, in all the provision given to his people, in the land that is promised... all things working for his glory. A grand redemptive story leading to glory.

All of it heading to another man, raised up for this purpose. To the greater Moses, the perfect mediator between God and man. That would proclaim the Father's glory, and secure it with his blood.

3) Purpose of Christ

From a miraculous birth and the angels singing of the glory of Immanuel, God with us - like a burning bush declaring that God had come to save his people. Needing no spokesmen Jesus lives a ministry of proclaiming the kingdom of God's arrival.

Working miracles... Not of devastation but of compassion - healing, restoring. Each miracle a sign for us, that we would believe the Jesus is the Messiah, the one promised to come and give people not merely a land to call their own but salvation, full and final, an eternity.

This is his purpose. Having entered into Jerusalem... His hour has come. **John 12:27-28** "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. [28] Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." (ESV)

From the declaration of his purpose, to glorify the Father by facing death. Taking on the burden of sin for all, meeting the full measure of wrath, God's displeasure with our sinful disobedience, our denial of his authority. Dying as our substitute, in our place that we would be forgiven. That all who believe in him would be made right with God, justified. His final breath declaring it is finished.

Then bursting forth from the grave, resurrected, glorified. His power revealed that his name would be known in all the earth.

The one who sustains the universe lowers himself to bring a people out of slavery into freedom, new life, true purpose...

Romans 11:36 “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” (ESV)

Like Pharaoh, our response to this revealed power, this work of redemption is important.

4) Response to Christ

Some will respond with **rejection**. Hearing of Christ, his miracles, his cross, and denying his power. That he can forgive, that he lives and reigns and will return to dwell with his people forever.

In this rejection missing the exodus... left to our captors, left to the small throne of our lives that we claim for ourselves. Securing destruction... the hardening of our hearts.

“The kingdom is both good and news and bad news. Good news to those who grasp their own wretchedness and spiritual need. Bad news to those whose wish to preserve their own individual autonomy.” Mark Sayers.

Then there are those that will submit to a different throne, to the true king, to Jesus. That will respond to the work of Christ, his miracles, his death and resurrection with belief. That he is who he said he is and that he holds all things together with the power of his word and that he has forgiven us, and freed us to a life of glorifying him and inviting others into that glory. Responding by **receiving** his grace for all of life, surrendering all the territory of our souls over to him.

This receiving then turns into **rejoicing**. That you are loved. That you are secure in Jesus. Finally safe, finally out of your Egypt. That his grace flows like the waves of the ocean, unending, constant and strong. That no one is too far from the reach of this Savior. That he rejoices over you with gladness. We might even dance knowing that he dances when he thinks of his love for us!

And all will glorify him... some in being freed by him... but even those that reject him will declare his power and authority - we are all headed to a moment where we will recognize this king for who he is.

Philippians 2:9-11 “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth

and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (ESV)

We exist to glorify God.

How will you respond?

Isaiah 45:22-23 “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. [23] By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: “To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.”(ESV)

Turn from your denial of his power and his grace, turn to Jesus. Believe in him, that he gave his body and blood for you, to give you life and purpose; to give you eternity. Gladly embrace the reason for our existence, to glorify him.

Keep coming back to it. “God loves to answer the prayer “Show me your glory.” When your soul hungers, when your tank feels empty, when you’re running on fumes, when you open your Bible [when we worship with the saints, our] request is this simple, honest, humble plea: “Father, show me your glory.”

“God made the world to show and share his glory. He made us *in his image* to reflect him in the world. But we will not fully reflect him if we haven’t yet stood in awe of him and enjoyed his beauty in our hearts. And our hearts cannot look on him in awe if we haven’t yet *seen* him with the eyes of our souls. Changed lives (and a changed world) begin with seeing glory. “*Beholding the glory of the Lord*, [we] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18).” - David Mathis

Rejoice in it. The main point of our lives is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. To know him and delight in his nature and character, his goodness toward us. See Jesus as supremely valuable, worthy and beautiful. Let his glory keep you from your old captors, from sin and in whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.

Make Him Famous. Invite others to be forgiven, to find purpose and to glorify Christ. Let Jesus do his work of transformation in you that your neighbors will see it. As we live from his grace for us, “we are beginning to tell the world, through our lives and our words and our affections, that God alone is awesome.”

My friend Tiff, in her ambition, has a vision of an arena of worship with every people and tongue praising God. This is a grand worship party and there are empty seats because people haven't been invited to glorify God. Your seat is ready, who will you bring with you?

Mission: We exist to glorify God by knowing Jesus and making him known through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. - This is who we claim to be and how we desire to live - may the Lord make this more than words on a website... make it a life...

“The praise of God’s glory will one day fill the globe, through us, and nothing will give us greater joy... For this end we were created. For this end we exist eternally. For this end we [live now.]” - Tony Reinke

This is our ultimate purpose, our greatest ambition and it is meant to redefine everything about us.

You exist to glorify God. May God be glorified in and through you.

Isaiah 43:5-7 “Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. [6] I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, [7] everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” (ESV)