

From Royalty to Run Away #2

Series: Epic Journey: From Where We Are to Where God Wants Us

Exodus 2:11-25

This summer we are taking an Epic Journey through the book of Exodus, which is the story of how God's chosen people were rescued from slavery in Egypt and brought to the edge of the Promised Land. God was taking them from where they were to where He wanted them to be. From here to there. And our big take-away for this series is that God is up to something similar in every one of our lives.

Wherever you are right now as a person, God has an amazing future for you. And He wants to bring you from here to there. So, as we walk through the book, we're going to see that this epic story intersects with our lives repeatedly. The Bible is enduring and is active and alive.

Last week we talked about the misery of the Hebrew people living in Egypt: they were forced into slavery, and the Pharaoh of Egypt had become so threatened by them that he made a law that any Hebrew boy that's born should be drown in the Nile River. But Moses is born; his mother put him in basket and places the basket in the Nile River, and he winds up being rescued by Pharaoh's daughter. She names him '**Moses,**' which comes from a word that means '**to draw out.**'

The title of today's message is From Royalty to Runaway.

Turn with me to Exodus 2, beginning with verse 11...

One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. 12Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. 13The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?"

14The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known."

15When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well.

16Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. 17Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock.

18When the girls returned to Reuel their father, he asked them, "Why have you returned so early today?"

19They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock."

20"And where is he?" Reuel asked his daughters. "Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat."

21Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. 22 Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, "I have become a foreigner in a foreign land."

23During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. 24God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. 25So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them. (NIV)

Let's Pray!

Moses has grown up. And if you looked at him, you would assume he was an Egyptian. He dressed like an Egyptian; he talked like an Egyptian. He walked like an Egyptian. And not just any average Egyptian, but an adopted child of Pharaoh. And yet, through the years, Moses never forgot where he came from. He had spent his first three or four years being raised by his own mother in a Hebrew home. And we don't know if he kept in contact with his biological family over the years, but it says in verse 11 that when he saw the Hebrew people being mistreated, he viewed them as his own people.

One day he was walking around a work site, and noticed a Hebrew man being beaten by an Egyptian leader. Probably not an unusual sight. But righteous anger rose up in Moses at the injustice he was witnessing.

Have you ever felt like that? You hear about a child being mistreated, or a woman being abused, and it just fills you with anger. That's how Moses felt. So, he approached the foreman, who probably stood up at attention when he saw the son of Pharaoh approaching. And before he knew what was happening, Moses killed him, and quickly buried the body in the sand.

Let me just say, don't do this. This is not an endorsement of vigilante justice.

I believe in his passion and anger; Moses was beginning to sense God's calling to rescue his mistreated people. The problem was...he went about it the wrong way.

The next day, Moses got up, and he overheard a couple of Hebrews arguing and one of them hauled off and hit the other one. Moses stepped in and tried to break it up. And the guy said, "Who do you think you are? Are you going to kill me like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?"

Apparently, the word had gotten out. And sure enough, Pharaoh found out about it and realized that his adopted son had turned on him...and Moses ran for his life. Just like that, Moses went from being royalty to a run-away...from a favored son to fugitive. And he found himself in a place called Midian.

Moses didn't want to swap the palace for the desert. No one chooses the wilderness. We prefer air-conditioned rooms and cul-de-sac—safety. But sometimes we have no vote. Disaster strikes and drops us in the desert.

Have you ever found yourself living in a desert? I'm not talking about a literal desert that's hot and dry and dangerous, but a spiritually dry and empty place.

Let me give you four words to describe life in the desert.

1. Frustration.

Moses thought his moment had arrived! He was going to seize his destiny, and it went horribly wrong. We all know that feeling, right? You finally finished college, and got your degree, but can't find the right job. You got what looked like your dream job, but it's not what they led you to believe. You got married to who you

thought was your soul mate, and it's not working out. God has called you to full-time ministry and you're facing challenging obstacles to fulfill your calling.

Or maybe some other thing in life that's turned out so different from what you expected. It causes frustration and disappointment.

2. Rejection.

Moses was rejected by not only his Egyptian family, but by his own people. Have you ever felt the sting of rejection? Your spouse says, "I think we're incompatible," and they file for divorce. Your girlfriend says, "I don't think we should see each other anymore, let's just be friends." Your adult child decides that what you believe is not what they believe, and they turn away from Jesus, or your family, who aren't Christians, reject you because you got saved. Your job lets you go, your boss turned you down for promotion, you didn't get accepted to the college you applied for, or you didn't make the team. Rejection. It comes in so many ways.

3. Isolation.

Moses went from being the BMOC [Big Man on Campus] to a nobody on the backside of the wilderness. He didn't know a single person. Ever felt like that?

You go away to college, and you don't recognize a single face in the dorm, the dining hall, or the classrooms. You join the military, and you feel all alone. You're different from other people, and you just feel disconnected. Alone. It feels like wandering in the wilderness.

4. Humiliation.

You feel like a failure. You feel frustrated, rejected, isolated, and embarrassed. You thought you were doing the right thing, but it turned out wrong. You took a chance to do something great, and everyone was watching, but you blew it. You handed your heart to someone you loved, and they crushed it. You don't want to talk about it...because it's humiliating. I think that's how Moses felt when he woke up in the morning, and remembered where he had been, and where he was now.

Years ago, a comedian named Milton Berle who wrote this poem:

"I'd rather be a could-be if I cannot be an are; Because a could-be is a maybe who is reaching for a star. I'd rather be a has-been than a

might-have-been, by far; For a might-have-been has never been, but a has was once an are."

In 1965, the Beatles wrote a song that summed up Moses' life to this point, called **Nowhere Man. Here are some of the lyrics...**

He's a real nowhere man. Sitting in his nowhere land. Making all his nowhere plans for nobody.

Doesn't have a point of view. Knows not where he's going to. Isn't he a bit like me and you? He's a real nowhere man.

You ever been to the desert place? Are you there right now? Here's what I think God wants you to never forget:

1. He's with you...He will never leave you or forsake you.

2. There are things that He can do with you in the desert that aren't possible anywhere else.

You wonder, "How could anything good possibly happen when I'm feeling rejection...frustration...isolation...and humiliation?"

Let me tell you, from the experience of Moses, some benefits of the desert place.

A. Perseverance.

I believe the burden that Moses felt to rescue his people from slavery, was a God-given burden. It was truly his calling! But he wasn't mature enough to know what to do with it. He went about it in his way and not God's way.

Do you know how long this desert time lasted for Moses? Forty years. You will find that out in Acts chapter 7. Forty years!

Moses "had been" a great man - the adopted grandson of the Pharaoh; a man destined for power and prestige until...one day he saw a cruel Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew. And Moses struck the Egyptian and killed him. When Pharaoh found out what Moses had done, he put a price on his head and Moses fled into the desert where he lived for the next 40 years as a shepherd taking care of his Father-in-law's sheep. In a matter of weeks, Moses went from being a powerful prince of Egypt to become a lowly shepherd caring for flocks he didn't even own.

D.L. Moody once noted that Moses spent forty years in Egypt thinking he was somebody; and forty years in Exile learning that he was a nobody.

Moses didn't realize this yet, but he was going to need supernatural perseverance and patience in the years ahead leading Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness for 40 years. Could it be that He's trying to teach you the same thing?

B. Compassion.

What Moses had was a passion to bring justice for the weak. What Moses didn't have was compassion or any concept of what it actually felt like to be weak.

And now suddenly, he was the outcast and the outsider. He was the one with no position and no status and no rights. He meets these young women by the side of a well, and winds up marrying one of them. And did you notice what he named his firstborn son? "Gershom." Which means "sojourner" or "alien" or "stranger." Moses was apparently getting the lesson.

For Moses to effectively lead the people God wanted him to lead, he had to first relate to with their situation. He had to feel what they felt. He needed empathy.

Lieutenant Jack Cambria was the commanding officer of the NYPD hostage negotiation team for over 33 years. He was also one of the guys they called in to talk suicidal people down from skyscrapers and bridges. He was an expert at connecting with people and winning the trust of people. Here's what he said: **'The very good negotiators, are the ones with life stories where they know what it means to have been hurt in love at one point in their life, to know success and perhaps most important, to know what it means to fail.'**

If you have any hope of relating to people in difficult situations, there's no way you can do that if you've never been through similar situations yourself.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, ***"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."* (NIV)**

When you experience suffering, you will look at other suffering people differently. Have you noticed that? You'll care. You'll be drawn to them. You will have true

compassion. And maybe God has allowed a desert time for you because He needs you to minister to people who will go through what you have gone through.

C. Maturity.

There are a couple of things you need to know about maturity.

1. OBEDIENCE IS PERFECTED IN SUFFERING

The Scripture even says of Jesus, ***“Son though he was, he (Jesus) learned obedience from what he suffered.”*** Heb. 5:8, NIV.

As James 1:2-4 says, ***“2Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*** (NIV)

The purpose of Bootcamp is to teach recruits to follow orders. In the wilderness we learn ***“Not my will, but thine be done.”***

2. SHORTCUTS ARE UNACCEPTABLE

One of the failures of Christianity in America is its preoccupation with cookie-cutter, safe, predictable faith, which renders real faith inoperable.

We are obsessed with trying to prove that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, but the life of faith isn't so reasonably measured. We must learn to walk by faith.

It takes a set amount of time for many things: cooking, gestation, training children, agriculture, etc. Many things cannot be rushed; the time must elapse for the process to be completed. There can't be shortcuts.

In spiritual things it's the same: we can't take shortcuts like partial commitment, partial repentance, partial discipleship, or partial obedience.

Jesus said there was only one way – the hard way! “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ***‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me’***” Matt. 16:24. ***“And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple”*** Lk. 14:27.

Biologists recognize a principle at work among plants and animals. This natural wonder is called "the adversity principle."

As strange as it seems, habitual well-being is not advantageous to a species. An existence without challenge takes its toll on virtually every living thing.

If you help a butterfly out of its cocoon, you will cause its early death. It needs the struggle of coming out to strengthen its wings, so it can fly.

Moses had spent basically all his life in a palace. He was pampered, well-fed and soft. So, God arranged for him to spend forty years in the outback, to toughen him up and prepare him for his future participation in God's plan.

Not only that, but Moses had spent his whole life focusing on himself. God arranged for him to become a husband, so he could learn how to live alongside and care for someone else...to learn to open the chariot door for his wife, put the toilet seat down, and all the other things marriage teaches you.

God arranged for him to become a father, so he could learn to deal with whiny and demanding children, which he would really need in the days to come.

God arranged for him to become a shepherd, so he could learn to lead and protect and nurture and sacrifice.

All those things matured him and developed him to be a man could use. It was all part of preparing him to use his God-given passion for God's glory.

Hebrews 12:11 says, "***No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.***" (NIV)

Think about this: instead of looking at the desert as punishment, look at it as preparation for some bigger purpose God has for you. And if we believed that there's a trainer who's very intentionally watching over us [Holy Spirit], I think we'd be much more hopeful about the future that we're being trained for.

D. Humility.

It says in the book of Numbers that Moses was the most humble man on the face of the earth. That's great, but we all know Moses wasn't always that way. When he walked out of the palace that day and looked out on his Hebrew people, he

was confident; and when he killed that Egyptian, he thought his Hebrew countrymen would view him as their hero. Someone who had the position and the power to rescue them. But instead of getting hailed as a hero, they say, "Who do you think you are?"

It's humbling to realize that people don't think of you as highly as you view yourself. Next thing he's on the run and living in Midian.

Life tends to humble you, especially when you're in the desert.

The Moses who lived in an Egyptian palace was aggressive and arrogant; the Moses who walked out of the desert 40 years later was humble, meek and mild. And that needed to happen for God to use him.

One more benefit of the desert:

E. Approval.

When Moses was growing up, there was a part of him that enjoyed the approval of his Egyptian community. But now his Egyptian community had rejected him.

There was an even bigger part of Moses that craved the approval of his Hebrew countrymen. He was one of them and tried to help them! But now, even the Hebrews had rejected him.

The desert tends to strip away things, and it forces you to ask this question: whose approval am I living for? Who am I trying to please?

Am I living my life, and making my decisions, because I'm trying to please some important people in my life? Or am I learning the freedom of living for God's approval alone? Am I learning to play to an audience of One?

Just so you know, when you're living for the approval of others, it's exhausting. It's a form of slavery. But when you live for God's approval, it's freedom.

This was an ongoing process for Moses. His earlier sources of approval have been stripped away, but in the next chapter he's going to meet God at the burning bush. And it's then that Moses is going to understand why he had to spend 40 years in the desert. He was being prepared for something bigger.

There are what we can call **no way** moments, when the situation you're facing looks impossible and it feels like there's no way forward...no way to change the circumstance...no way to get over it, to get through it, or get around it. No way.

Maybe you find yourself in one of those no way moments. I want you to know that **God wants to turn your no way into a new way.**

Listen to these amazing verses in Isaiah 43:16-19 from a fellow desert dweller.

"This is what the LORD says, He who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army, and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: 'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.'" Isaiah 43:16-19 (NIV)

Three Quick Take-Aways

1. Embrace God's Grace in your Desert Place

Because grace has the power to change you. You need God's grace every moment. In Second Corinthians 12:9, Paul says, ***"Each time He said, 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me."*** 2 Cor.12:9 (NLT)

You see, when I bring my weakness and my brokenness to God, then He can show His power and his strength in us and through us. Sometimes we must come to the place of brokenness and say, "God, I can't change. I've tried. I need you. I need your power. I need your strength to change me."

2. Find God's Well in Your Wilderness

Verse 15 says, "When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well."

There are three kinds of people in the world, accusers, people who blame others for their problems, excusers, those who always make excuses for what they're going through, and there are choosers, those who choose to take responsibility for their attitudes and their actions.

Maybe you've experienced a lot of pain in your past that you didn't cause and that wasn't your fault. But now, it's your responsibility to deal with it so that you can heal and move forward. How can you do that.

When God leads you to the desert, make sure you sit down by a well. You still need prayer, bible ready, your church family. Don't run away from God and everyone else, run to them and get strength from them.

3. Find God's New Way

"See, I am doing a new thing!" Isaiah 43:19 (NIV)

God is already doing the new thing in your life; you just can't see it right now. But God says open your spiritual eyes, because if you're in the middle of the desert, He says, "I'm already working a new plan, a new way for you, that's going to take you to the next level."

And then in the next part of the verse in verse 19, He says, ***"Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"*** Isaiah 43:19b (NIV)

And then in the last part of verse 19, God says, ***"I can make a way in the wilderness and springs in the wasteland."*** Isaiah 43:19c (NIV)

Maybe you feel like your life is in a wasteland right now, your career's in a wasteland, just know that God's already making a new way in the wilderness.

Maybe you're in a desert of depression, a wilderness of worry, God's already making a new way.

Maybe your marriage is in a desert right now. God is already drilling down, and the springs of living water are getting ready to flow and wash over you. God is up to something new. God is up to something powerful. If I perceive it, I'll believe it, then I can receive it.

So, pray this week, God help me perceive the new thing you're doing as you're making a new way.

2 Corinthians 4:17 says, ***"And this small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble."*** (GN)

ILLUSTRATION: While traveling to the funeral service for his young nephew that was killed in a tragic automobile accident, God gave a song to Don Moen to be used as a source of comfort, healing, strength, and hope for the grieving parents and family members. He sang it privately to the family members and later recorded it.

His song, "GOD WILL MAKE A WAY", is based on Isaiah 43:19 which says, "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not see it? I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." Here are the lyrics to the song...

"God will make a way where there seems to be no way. He works in ways we cannot see. He will make a way for me. He will be my guide, hold me closely to His side. With love and strength for each new day, He will make a way.

By a roadway in the wilderness, He'll lead me; And rivers in the desert will I see. Heaven and earth will fade; But His Word will still remain; He will do something new today. He will make a way.

Embrace grace, find God's well, Find Gods New Way...

CONCLUSION:

So, what do we do with all this? Let me remind you of something I said last week: if you read the book of Exodus and you learn about Moses, that'll be helpful. But if **you allow Exodus to point you to Jesus, it'll be transformational.**

Moses was a great man, but let Moses point you to Jesus. Just like Moses, Jesus was rejected by his own people. It says in John chapter one that Jesus came to that which was his own, but his own people did not receive him.

Just like Moses spent time as a shepherd, Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep."

Moses spent 40 years in the desert, being prepared for his calling, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness, being tempted by the devil and prepared for his calling.

You know what the big difference is? We're going to see all through Exodus that Moses risked his life to rescue his people. But Jesus gave his life to save his people.

Since Jesus was willing to walk into that ultimate desert for us, we can know that He now walks in every desert with us.

In those times of rejection, disappointment, isolation, and humiliation...Jesus is right there in the desert with us. And every time you doubt that, just look at the cross!