

ENGAGING PASSION - FINDING A WAY

Ordinary Time

Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14

A Sermon Preached by
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University Congregational United Church of Christ
Seattle, Washington 98125
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Scripture – Read by Liturgists

As we seek to respond to your word and will, and encourage one another in the growth of our minds and spirits, let us hear this morning's scripture from Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14.

Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14¹

⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed toward the people, and they said, "What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?" ⁶ So he had his chariot made ready, and took his army with him; ⁷ he took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.

¹⁰ As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. ¹¹ In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. ¹¹ They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² "Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians?' For it would be better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness. ¹³ But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still."

Pastor Amy Roon

Due to failure of the recording system, there is no record and therefore no transcript. However, we have notes from Jeff Keith prepared for people who could not attend the service.

Amy began with a prayer and shared a quote sometimes attributed to noted abolitionist Harriet Tubman: "I've freed a thousand slaves. I could have saved thousands – if only I'd been able to convince them they were slaves."

Over this past week our nation has experienced a struggle and a need for liberation in any way that you can imagine.² The stages of grief will be

¹ The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Old Testament. ©1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. .

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experienced by many, and they will occur at their own pace and in their own way. Many of us need to be freeing ourselves from the person or persons that have you enslaved. The power can come by connecting to others to help you stay free. Liberty is your God-given right. But it is necessary to be aware of all that enslaves you. Amy confesses she has her own work to do on internalized racism and sexism, and finding what it means to be free.

There is a deep truth for us all in this Exodus story: There is the getting out of Egypt; staying out; figuring out who you are so that your identity is not only as a victim. In regard to the enslaved Israelites, some but not all were deeply enslaved to their own minds. Once they had followed Moses out into the wilderness they began to question what they had left behind. The Egyptian chariots were approaching as they fled. Some may have said, "I will meet and talk to them and I will return to Egypt to what I had." Others knew they could not go back. The Egyptians were not happy about their departure. This was a major shift in their relational dynamics.

There are many movements in the modern-day church toward assisting and helping people of color and those in need to find freedom. This story is so very true in its meaning and relevance to the plight of those enslaved. Yet none of it shows up in Egyptian history. The Egyptians enslaved many people from many places and they do not recall the enslavement of Hebrews nor do they recognize their suffering. It would not be in their self-interest.

You have the God-instilled right to know who made you and set you free. Moses told those he'd led from Egypt: "Do not be afraid. The Egyptians you see today you shall never see again. We refuse to turn back. We keep going."

Let the change resonate and know: "We will not go back!" Amen!

UCUCC: AR/JK

Transcribed by Beth Bartholomew 3/13/2019 from email from Jeff Keith 09/30/2018

² Events included sexual misconduct claims against Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh, his denial of the charges, and the conviction of TV star Bill Cosby as a "sexually violent predator." Information accessed 3/14/2019 from https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_in_the_United_States#September.