

**First Presbyterian Church**  
**Exodus 6:6-7a, Deut. 10:17-20, “Redeemed for Mission”**  
**by Pastor Matt Johnson, 6/20/2021**

This weekend I had the joy of attending an ordination service  
for a new colleague in Portland, and the sermon was given  
by Pastor Robin Garvin.

She told a story that I really connected with about reading an article  
about church leadership while emerging from the pandemic entitled,  
“Ten Things Your Church Should Have in Place Right Now.”  
*Right now!*

She knew she had made a mistake half-way through the article  
when her heart rate became elevated and her palms began to get sweaty.

Though I hadn’t read that article, I can certainly relate.  
There seems to be so many things we ought to be doing to make them most  
of this time, and they all need to be done ... *right now!*

But let’s absolve ourselves of all that. Friends, this church isn’t ours.  
The head of the church is Jesus Christ,  
and Jesus is with us, empowering us, filling us,  
and loving us...right now!

So with no anxiety in our hearts, I want us to think together  
about what it is that *Jesus* is doing right now  
when we bring our love of neighbors and the mission of God together.

It’s my contention that when we combine neighbors & mission  
we end up with something of the radical hospitality  
that Jesus himself practiced and invites the church into. [REPEAT]

After taking two week talking about neighbors and neighborhoods,  
we’re going to take three weeks to consider what we mean by Mission.  
Why so long? Because we’ve got as many  
definitions of being missional as we’ve had  
invitations to Zoom meetings over the past year.

So today we’re talking about mission from a waaaaaay back perspective  
as found in Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy.

I'm starting back here because mission and being missional  
is not something new, and it's not something added on.  
You'll see that it's been the central purpose of God from the start.

Israel was first chosen for mission as the descendants of Abraham and Sarah,  
since in Genesis 12:1-3 they were blessed  
to be an agent of God's blessing so that through them  
"all families on earth would be blessed." That's mission!

But over time, they found themselves trapped in centuries of slavery  
from which they were powerless to escape.  
In the midst of that, through God's deliverance in the Exodus story,  
they were also redeemed for mission...and so are we.

In Exodus 6, Yahweh declares to Israel,  
"I will **redeem** you with an outstretched arm  
and with mighty acts of judgment."

Through the 10 plagues on Egypt  
and parting the Red Sea and journeying to the promised land,  
Israel experienced God's redemption and restoration.

Redeeming in the ancient world could mean a number of things:

- 1) It could be the act of bringing a murderer to justice,  
thereby redeeming the honor of a slain family member.
- 2) It could be the act of maintaining an individual's standing  
with regard to family identity. This is what we see between  
Ruth and Boaz where Boaz is her "kinsman redeemer."
- 3) It could be the act of buying someone's freedom  
who was being held in slavery,  
or reclaiming land that had been given as collateral for debt.

In each case, something that has been lost is regained or restored  
through the concrete action of an outside party.

The good news of Jesus is that your life, our life,  
your neighbors lives can also be redeemed.

We have a Redeemer. There is someone outside of us who is able to restore and renew us; someone who can give us hope  
*both* in this life and in the next.

All throughout the Bible, we see that the Exodus redemption was an example of God's typical way of redeeming.

It was the paradigm through which God's people in both the Old and New Testaments have understood God's redemption.

But it goes further than that:

It is also the paradigm through which they understand the mission of God's people.  
Our redemption and God's mission are intimately related.

What we see in Deuteronomy chapter 10 is quite simple, and yet quite profound:

God has redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt.  
As a result, they are to take God's posture of grace toward themselves as the model for relating to others in the world. [REPEAT]

Listen to the way Moses describes

God's perspective toward those who are *outside* the nation of Israel:

Verses 17-18 say, "**For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.**"

This is amazing, isn't it? Israel is not yet in the promised land in Deuteronomy.

So Yahweh "defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow."

He also is said to love migrant people from nations other than Israel who nevertheless reside within Israel's camp. He doesn't only love them, but gives them food and clothing.

How do you think Yahweh went about providing that food and clothing? ...Hmm

The next verse extends this mission of Yahweh to the people of Israel,  
on the basis of the way God redeemed them out of Egypt!

**“19 And you are to love those who are foreigners,  
for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.”**

The Israelites were once foreigners in Egypt,  
but God showed them grace, love and redemption.

Because of this, they are to replicate the way God treated them  
when they encounter foreigners.

But as we saw in verse 17, providing for the needs of these other people  
is not merely a duty for the Israelites, it is truly the work of Yahweh himself.

So from my way of reading, **the People of Mission are  
redeemed through God’s mission  
to continue the redemptive work  
of the God of Mission.**

Why? Because they were redeemed in that way by God themselves.  
See how these things fit together?

God asks that we see the way we are loved  
even in our sin and rebellion, even in our weakness and inability to escape,  
and then love others in the same way,  
knowing that we are joining in God’s own demonstration of love.

God’s redemption of Israel through freeing them from Egypt  
was a foreshadowing of the redemption that all humanity  
would have access to in being freed from sin through Jesus Christ.

If we are redeemed by God’s mission for the purpose of continuing God’s mission,  
what does it look like when we do that?

Throughout history, faithful, honest, God loving people  
have tended to walk somewhere on a spectrum between two poles  
in trying to apply this redemptive model to their mission:  
The pole of Spiritual Mission and the pole of Political Mission.

On one hand, the Spiritual Mission approach has said,  
“Yes, God loves the foreigners in our midst,  
so we ought to love the foreigners in our midst.  
Of course in our day these people are not *real foreigners*, but non-Christians.  
Because God is love, what it means to love non-Christians  
is to give them spiritual insight about God.  
After all, *Spiritual things* are what’s most important about life,  
because without salvation nothing else matters.  
So (those on the Spiritual Mission path say)  
we best stand in the redemptive tradition  
of the Exodus and the work of Jesus by sharing spiritual truths  
with non-Christians whom God brings into our lives.  
The important thing is that they believe the truth.”

On the other hand, the Political Mission tradition has said,  
“Yes, God loves the foreigners in our midst, so we ought to love foreigners as well.  
This means anyone who is  
actually an immigrant to our country (documented or undocumented),  
or anyone who experiences political oppression around the world.  
Because God is a God of liberation,  
what it means to love oppressed people  
is to set them free from the unjust system  
that keeps them from getting a fair shake.  
After all, bringing about justice and tangible empowerment of people  
is what really matters in life.  
So (those on the Political Mission pole say) we stand in the redemptive tradition  
of the Exodus and the work of Jesus through social justice  
for the oppressed people whom God brings into our lives—  
that is what will truly bring them out of slavery to sin.  
If they see our Christian faith while we pursue these things, then so be it;  
but I’m not shoving it down any body's throat.  
The important thing is that people who are loved by God are liberated.”

My view is that neither of these paths does a complete job  
of seeing the basic shape of God's redemptive mission.

Both of them latch onto aspects of it, but neither of them  
read and apply Scripture with enough integrity.

I choose the word integrity on purpose here,  
because the truly biblical vision of redemption *integrates*  
the insights of the Spiritual and Political mission perspectives.  
When our reading of Scripture has this kind of *integrity* it will also challenge  
the falsehoods contained in each perspective.

What are the falsehoods in each approach?

On the one hand, the Spiritual path is truly blind  
when it comes to the content of the biblical story:

When Israel was redeemed by God from slavery,  
they were actual slaves with an oppressive political regime  
making money off of their labor.

When God says he loves the foreigners it's not with spiritual truths,  
but with food and clothing—the things they actually need.

God's love hits the ground and calls the People of Mission  
to take practical steps against political injustice  
along with every other kind of sin.

Some might say, "Well that's just the Old Testament,"  
but then I would wonder if they've truly read the New Testament.

On the other hand, the Political path is truly blind  
when it comes to the relationship of worship, praise and obedience  
that accompanies social justice and liberation.

Israel does not merely say,

"Thanks for the freedom, Yahweh, see you around sometime."

Nor does God merely set about liberating people left and right  
without revealing God's character and calling forth  
a covenant relationship of forgiveness and love.

No, what we hear from Israel in Deut. 10 verse 21 is this:

**“Yahweh is the one you praise; he is your God,  
who performed for you those great and awesome wonders.”**

So if Israel does join in God’s redemptive mission toward foreigners in their midst,  
they will surely do so while praising the name  
of the one whose power makes their reversal of fortune possible.

If you have been redeemed by God,  
then let us join together in joining God’s redemptive mission.  
We are the People of Mission,  
and that means we are called to engage the totality  
of God’s created reality:

the spiritual, the social, the political, the economic, the relational.

We must ask God to give us a creative vision which extends  
to all these aspects of our lives,  
and to see his liberating work in our souls  
and in our neighborhoods as genuinely of one piece.

PRAY