


Wednesday in Invocavit, the 7th Day of Lent
March 4, 2009

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University Lutheran Chapel
Minneapolis, Minnesota

✧ Jesu juva ✧

MOUNT HOREB (SINAI)
Exodus 3:1-12

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

onight we continue our Lenten pilgrimage to the mountains. Last week we saw how Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah prefigured the way God the Father offered His son for sacrifice from the same mountain in Jerusalem. Tonight we will go to a different mountain, Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai. Here we find another prefiguring of Christ in the prophet Moses and in the Exodus event.

Recall how the descendants of Abraham had begun living in the land of Canaan. We are told that after only three generations there was a great famine in the land. And the sons of Jacob, the great grandsons of Abraham, were invited by their brother Joseph to come and live in the land of Goshen in Egypt. Some time after the death of Joseph, they fell into bondage. They were made into slaves. Moses records all of this for us with foreshortened sight: "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, 'Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.' Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage." They remained for 430 years; years which were spent in servitude and slavery.

Today on Mount Horeb we see how God plans to rescue the children of Israel from that bondage. Moses, who had recently fled from Egypt is tending the flock of his father-in-law when he approaches Mount Horeb. There he sees a great sight, a bush engulfed in flames, yet not being burned up. He goes up into the mountain to examine this fantastic display when God calls to him from the bush and explains His intention to save the captives in Egypt. He says: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey... Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Thus God outlines his plan of deliverance for His people.

Moses, however, is a little taken aback. He had, after all, just fled from Egypt where he had killed a man and would now be in danger of losing his own life at the hands of the pharaoh should he return. So when the Lord says to him, come now and I'll send you to pharaoh and you'll lead the Israelites out of Egypt, he is understandably pessimistic. He says: "Who am I that I should go to pharaoh and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt." And later he protests: "O my Lord, I am not

eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” Then he begs: “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send.” But the Lord’s plan of deliverance would not be derailed by Moses’ misgivings and fears.

Well, I do not need to repeat the entire history for you. The Lord followed through on His plans to bring the Israelites out of bondage. Moreover, He brought them out with a strong hand. As Psalm 136 says: “He struck the firstborn of Egypt, brought Israel out from among them with a strong hand, divided the Red Sea in two and made Israel pass through the midst of it but overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. Then He led His people through the wilderness...” (my paraphrase) finally bringing them safely into the promised land after 40 years. Thus God accomplished their deliverance he spoke of on Mount Horeb. He freed His people from their bondage and brought them into the promised land.

We too were a people held in bondage. Our captor was not the wicked pharaoh and our prison was not the brick yards of Egypt. No, our captor was one even more powerful than pharaoh and all of his armies. Our captor was a mighty foe, one that no man can beat on his own. Our captor was sin. As one Lenten hymn puts it:

“Enslaved by sin and bound in chains,
Beneath its dreadful tyrant sway,
And doomed to everlasting pains;
We wretched, guilty captives lay.”

If it were not enough to be held captive by sin, we also have Satan reminding us constantly of the fact and trying to goad us into more sin, and we had the promise of death and torment on account of our sins. What wretched shape we were in; a far worse condition than any earthly slavery could be.

But just as in the Exodus event, the Lord heard the cry of his people. He hears our penitent prayers for relief from this burden and freedom from this bondage. Moreover, He promised deliverance for us. His plan of deliverance, however, is more ancient than the sound of our prayers. It is even older than His plan to deliver the Israelites from Egypt. For the plan of deliverance is found in the person of Christ who says of Himself in Proverbs: “I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth.” When Christ took on flesh and became man the plan was enacted and fulfilled. Through Him we are delivered from our captor, sin; from our taskmaster, the devil; and from the prison house of death.

Indeed, the Lord has saved us with His Strong Hand and with His outstretched Arm, through Christ Jesus. This is the salvation and deliverance prefigured in the Exodus from Egypt. St. Paul interprets all of this for us: “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” Do you see how this points to our salvation?

For how are we saved? As the Israelites had to pass through the red sea, where their captor pharaoh was killed and they were brought out alive, so also we pass through the sea of Baptism, wherein our captor, sin, is drowned and we are given new life. As the Israelites were nourished along the way with spiritual food and drink from the Rock which was Christ, so also we are all nourished along the way with spiritual food and drink, the sacrament of Holy Communion, the eating and

drinking of Christ. As they were kept safely under the cloud of God's Presence during their sojourn in the wilderness, so also we are kept safely under His Presence as we complete our sojourn in the wilderness of this life. And as they were finally brought into the promised land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey; so we also will finally be brought into a land flowing with milk and honey, the promised land of Heaven.

In the Scriptures Christ is even shown to be the second Moses. For Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 18: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren." In Acts 3, this Prophet is identified as Christ. This second Moses is, however greater than the first, and this second deliverance greater than the first. The writer to the Hebrews explains: "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses" Where Moses hesitated, Christ went boldly forward. Where Moses feared the Pharaoh, Christ bravely faced Pontius Pilate and the High Priest. Where Moses was worried about losing his life, Christ willingly gave up His life. And it is on account of this that we are saved. Truly God has saved us with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. For through Christ, He has freed us from the bondage of sin and is bringing us to the promised land. Amen

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✧ Soli Deo gloria ✧