



# Bible Study

April 8, 2015

Exodus 2:11-22

Job 2:1-10

Matthew 26:6-16

Exodus 2:11-22 (NKJV) -

Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, "Why are you striking your companion?" Then he said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" So Moses feared and said, "Surely this thing is known!" When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock. Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. When they came to Reuel their father, he said, "How is it that you have come so soon today?" And they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock." So he said to his daughters, "And where is he? Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses. And she bore him a son. He called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

Job 2:1-10 (NKJV) - Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause." So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes. Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks.

Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Matthew 26:6-16 (NKJV) - And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table. But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor." But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

**Commentary** - During Holy Week, as we accompany Christ through His final Passion and suffering, we also read the stories of Moses and Job from the Old Testament, whose sufferings in part provide the framework for us to understand the sufferings of Christ on our behalf. Christ fulfills these Old Testament stories, the Greek word used for fulfill literally means 'to fill to overflowing'. The ideas that we see in the Old Testament, the stories, and also the similar sufferings in our own lives, are filled with meaning by Christ's story and His sufferings, to the point that they burst forth in an overwhelming wave of grace and truth.

The Prophet Moses was raised in Pharaoh's household, the household of the ruler of the greatest superpower of that era; a man who considered himself to be, and was worshiped as, a god. From that vantage point, he saw the suffering of his people, the Hebrews, and desired to end those sufferings and deliver those people. In the reading today we read how his initial attempt to redress the wrongs was made using Pharaoh's weapon and strategy, using violence and murder to fight oppression, and fighting fire with fire. This approach did not, and could not work. A people cannot be delivered from evil by more evil.

In order to come to know God, and to free his people, Moses had to leave Pharaoh's household and become like his people. And so, after wandering in the desert, a stranger and alien in another land, he became a servant, tending another man's flocks and herds. It was only once he had become like his fellow Hebrews that he could come to know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his ancestors, who had also sojourned as strangers in a strange land. It was only by becoming weak, by suffering, that Moses could become the leader of a weak, dominated people, and lead them to freedom not by might or by power, not by raising an army and fighting for it, but by humble obedience and the hand of God.

Likewise we see in the story of Job just how far Job has fallen. Job had every blessing in this world, from his family and many children to material wealth in flocks and herds, to a rich spiritual life interceding before the Lord for himself and his family. Satan, as always, the accuser of the brethren, tells God that Job is faithful to Him only because of all these blessings. Ultimately, he is accusing God of buying Job's love, and claims that Job will turn on Him if those blessings are taken away. The Lord therefore allows every one of those blessings to be taken away, from Job's children to his wealth, and even his health, until he was covered from head to toe with painful boils. The place where Job went to sit is literally the heap of human filth outside of the city where the people went to empty their chamber pots. He is left sitting there, scraping the boils open to drain them with an old piece of broken pottery. Still, even at his wife's urging, Job refuses to utter a word against God, saying only that he had accepted so much good from God over his life, how could he not also accept the bad when it came in its time? It is only by being laid low, near to the point of death itself, that Job will eventually come to truly see and

recognize the incredible power of God.

Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ saw the sufferings of the people of His Creation, and so came from the Throne with the Father and the Spirit to become like us, taking upon Himself our human nature. Our human nature which had become subject to weakness, sorrow, suffering, and pain because of our sinfulness, and so He came to suffer for our sins, having none of His own. Misunderstood and disbelieved by even His closest followers, Christ was even betrayed to His death by one of them, sold for the price of a slave.

The Roman philosopher Seneca said, “He who has learned how to die has unlearned slavery.” By this he pointed to the reality that death is the only threat this world and its ruler, Satan, have to level against us. The fear of this threat, the fear of death, drives us to all kinds of sin, wickedness and evil. The fear of our eventual death drives us to seek temporal pleasures, to be greedy, proud, and focused on ourselves, to take advantage of and mistreat others for our own sake. The kings of this world use the threat of death and suffering to enslave us to their will. Ironically, those things to which we flee, those things to which we end up enslaving ourselves for fear of death, are the very things that bring about our destruction.

Moses, by being laid low and becoming a servant and a shepherd, by losing everything he had previously held dear, came to no longer fear death, and so he could stand before Pharaoh unafraid. Through knowing the Living God, Moses knew that Pharaoh could kill him, but he could not do him any harm. Job too, through losing everything that once had defined who he was as a person, learned to no longer fear death, so that in the end he could say, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at last upon the Earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19:25-27).

Brothers and sisters in Christ, Moses and Job were able to live lives free from fear, free from the fear of death, because they lived their lives in the same expectation in which we live this week. They lived in expectation of Pascha. Not the first Passover, which delivered God's people from Pharaoh, but this Great and Holy Pascha, the Pascha of the Lord, in which all the people of the world are brought over from death to life. This day in which death itself dies, and the ruler of this world is judged; Satan now de-clawed and de-fanged. By patiently enduring suffering, and by becoming weak, they were able to see the strength and power of God beforetime, a strength and power that we will again behold and celebrate in just a few short days. Let us complete this fast with similar endurance, because when we are weak, it is then that God is strong.

### **Questions to Ponder -**

- 1) In Exodus, we read of more than one incident in which Moses refused to sit by and watch injustice take place, or the strong to abuse the weak. Are there areas in your life where you know wrong has taken place but you have been afraid to speak or act to put a stop to it? What is the source of that fear?
- 2) Job speaks about receiving both good and bad from the hand of God. Are you thankful to God for all of His blessings to you? How and how often do you express it? How do you react when some of those blessings are, even temporarily, taken away?
- 3) The woman in St. Matthew's gospel offers Christ an extravagant gift from her poverty. Is what you give to Christ and His Church extravagant compared to your own lifestyle? We, like the disciples, make many pious sounding excuses. What do you keep for yourself that you might instead offer to the Lord?

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