**BCM Bible Study: September 23/24, 2020**

**Exodus 5:1-7:7: Failure and God’s Glory**

Review last week’s challenge: “Take some time each day to express your unedited doubts, frustrations, hopes, or thoughts to God. Take note of any response you receive this week.”

Things Get Worse: **Read Exodus 5:1-21**

* What is the basis of Pharaoh’s dismissal of Moses and Aaron?
  + “Pharaoh does not keep the Israelites under lock and key because he doesn’t know who Yahweh is, but because he does not *know* Yahweh, meaning he does not accord him any respect.” (Peter Enns)
* In Pharaoh’s disdain for Yahweh, he responds with his own command in an effort to establish his authority over and against the God of Israel. In doing so, there is some remarkable Hebrew wordplay happening. The verbal root for “work” (v.9, 18) and “worship” (4:23) is the same. This draws the battle lines in the story – whom will Israel serve? Will they work or worship?
  + What are some other masters (i.e. schoolwork, approval from parents, societal expectations, the desire to be liked, etc.) that compete for our devotion to God? How can these masters pull you away from a sense of worship into a mindset of working to measure up to a certain standard?
  + When God hears the cries of his people, he seeks to rescue them. When Pharaoh hears their cries, he not only prevents them from leaving, he increases their hardship.
    - What does this show you about Pharaoh’s heart? About the heart of God?
    - **Read Romans 6:15-23**. Have you experienced the different kinds of “bondage” described in this passage? (slaves to sin vs. slaves to righteousness) How are they different?
* As this section ends, things have gotten worse! We might be asking, “Wait, I thought God told Moses to do this. Why are things getting worse? What is happening?”
  + Have you ever experienced difficulty and setbacks when trying to pursue God’s will?
  + **Read 1 Peter 4:12-13**. What does this teach us about what it means to follow God?
  + How can we remain faithful in the midst of difficulty like this?

The Table is Set: **Read Exodus 5:22-6:9**

* This conversation mirrors the one from chapter 3. How might Moses hear God’s words differently now that he has experienced discouragement?
* Exodus 6:3 is a pivotal verse in Exodus. God says that he is telling the people a new name. We saw in chapter 3 that names represent the character of a person. Therefore, through these events, God’s character as Savior will be seen in a way that He hadn’t revealed before.
  + Knowing this, why was Moses’ initial “failure” important for God’s purposes in revealing his new name?
  + “Moses has not yet learned that there is more at stake here than how *he* is doing. God’s character is at stake.” (Peter Enns) How does this quote speak to your own life?
* Have you personally experienced others’ rejection of God’s word? How did you feel as a result?
* It is interesting that many times Christians are surprised when people reject God and turn to follow their own wisdom. In reality, this has been happening since the beginning of humanity. Christians often respond in a couple of ways. Some become angry and insist that people obey and become offended by culture. Others double down on strategy, thinking of the next best way to convert people.
  + Have you experienced these reactions?
  + What is an alternative way to respond in a way that shows other people what Jesus is like?

**Read Exodus 6:10-30**

* This genealogy is in an odd place. There are two clues to its purpose.
  + First, what does the genealogy itself focus on? Why might this be important to the story of Exodus?
  + Second, notice that verses 10-12 and 28-30 are identical. They do not represent separate events, but serve as bookends to the genealogy. These bookends are intentional – they tell us why the genealogy is included.
    - What is the message of the bookends?
    - How does this relate to the genealogy?
* Moses, in writing this, seems to be intent of authenticating Aaron’s role in the mission of God. It is hard to say why Aaron needed to be supported in this way, but God does so by looking both backward at his ancestors and forward at his descendants. Why does God do this? Why not focus on Aaron himself?
  + “God’s purpose reaches backwards and forwards.” (Peter Enns) By looking at God’s faithfulness through the line of Levi, we see God’s covenant faithfulness at work, not why Aaron is worthy to take on his role. Can you trace God’s story of faithfulness in your own life whether through your family or friends?

**Read Exodus 7:1-7**

* There are many points worth attention here (i.e. verse 5), but we will return to these themes later. For now, let’s focus on verse 1. What does it mean that Moses is like God to Pharaoh?
  + How did Moses play the role of God to Pharaoh?
  + The New Testament tells us that we represent Christ in the world. We are his ambassadors, his image-bearers. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:20.** What does it look like to be Christ to others?

Conclusion

Moses’ ability to “be God” to others improves over the course of his life as he grows in *intimacy* with God. Consider this quote: “Moses’ acting like God is not so much a comment on his elevation to some superhuman status. It is, rather, a sad comment on the ‘subhuman’ status to which the rest of humanity…have sunk because of Adam’s sin. From this canonical perspective, Moses is not *super*human, but *truly* human – he is a new Adam. His true humanity is displayed precisely in his intimacy with God.” What is your sense of intimacy with God?

**Challenge**: Sit alone or with a friend somewhere outside. Spend 3 minutes thanking God for the gifts he has given you. Next, spend 3 minutes reflecting on times when God felt particularly close to you. Close with at least 3 minutes of silence.

Extra Notes:

* On one hand, Moses gives his statement to Pharaoh with authority. It is curious, however, that he asks first to go to a festival, perhaps lessening the insult to the demigod. A festival would have included sacrifices, but Moses does seem to be a little off-script. This is not unusual for him at this point in the story – he is wavering.
* The first phrase in verse three is kind of like - “Read my lips.” It could be loosely translated, “God is on our side.” It is also odd that Moses says that God will be angry with *us*. Perhaps the plan is not clear to Moses yet. Or maybe he is hedging his language. Or perhaps it is a threatening suggestive remark…it’s hard to know! The author does not get caught up in the weeds; he has a bigger point with which he is concerned.
* Moses and Aaron aren’t expected to work, they are simply the representatives.
* The theme of Israelite rejection picks up here towards the end of chapter 5. Moses will face a cycle of trust and rejection, always based on the people’s perception of how things are going.
* The genealogy in chapter 6 is shortened. It begins with the first two oldest sons and then zooms in on Levi, but there is no way that it accounts for all the generations of Levi over hundreds of years. But this is not a problem for us! (unless we are trying to create a strict historical record) The authors purpose in the genealogy is *theological*. Not below that there is a multi-generational jump from Kohath to Amram.
* Why does the genealogy stop at Phineas? Perhaps this tells us something about when the genealogy was written. Or maybe it was simply for symmetry. It could also be because of the great acts of Phineas (Numbers 25) that are being used to authenticate Aaron.
* In the Hebrew, 7:1 does not include the word “like”; it says that God will make Moses God. In Pharaoh’s world, he was god. So when God tells Moses that he is like God, he is making a statement about who is really God.
* Our understanding of representation Christ in the world is deepened when we consider our *union* with Christ. Think about 1 Cor. 6:17.

