

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2020

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"Goin' On A Lion Hunt"

Based on Exodus 14:19-31

*Goin' on a lion hunt.
Goin to catch a big one.
I'm not afraid. Look, what's up
ahead? Egyptians!
Can't go over them.
Can't go under them.
Can't go around them.
Let's go the other way.*

*Goin' on a lion hunt.
Goin to catch a big one.
I'm not afraid. Look, what's up
ahead? The Red Sea!
Can't go over it.
Can't go under it.
Can't go around it.
Gotta go through it!
~based on the Children's Song*

Well this was quite the pickle the Chosen People found themselves in: an Egyptian army of soldiers and chariots barreling down upon them from one direction, and their backs against the waters of the Red Sea on the other.

- There was no way out and nowhere to go.
- They were not prepared to fight.
- They were not able to swim.
- They were all going to die, before this grand adventure to the Promised Land even

got off the ground. And the general noise of complaints and dissatisfaction in the crowd about the heat and the flimsy tents, and the grumpy children rose to a great crescendo of weeping and wailing and finger pointing.

"This is all your fault, Moses! Why couldn't you just leave things well enough alone. But oh no, you had to come along and get the rebellious crowd all bent out of shape and riled up about their rites and these ancient promises of YHWH. Now look where we are! You can hear the rumble of the Egyptian chariots shake the earth and they're still miles away. This water is too deep, and we don't have any boats. We're all going to die before we even get out of Egypt. We should have just stayed put. At least there would have been food to eat and a bed for the kids to sleep in. This was a really stupid idea Moses, and it's all your fault."

And Moses, in one of his less than finer moments, sniveled off to a quiet corner to have a chat with YHWH. "God, nobody likes me,

everybody hates me. They're all mad at me. They want me to do something, but God, what am I supposed to do? Do something, God. Do something!"

YHWH's response was very similar to what hundreds of years later, His son, Jesus would say to the disciples anxious about finding food to feed five thousand people on a hillside. "Me, Moses? You! You do something! I thought you trusted me. I thought you understood the Call you received from Me by the burning bush. I thought you believed, truly believed when I told you, "I Am Who I Am!" Moses, you do something."

"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea," (v21)

What happened next has baffled non-believers, excited anthropologists, bewildered linguists and made Charlton Heston a household word. The movie world portrays an intense scene with tsunamic like walls of water parting and making a path for the Chosen People to walk safely to the other side; water then crashing in upon the Egyptian army as they pursued. Linguists have argued that a scribe's error generations ago

actually meant that the body of water was a shallow, muddy, grassy, marsh-like area: a 'reed sea', not a 'red sea;' an area dry enough to allow people to walk through, but muddy enough to mire down chariots and stop them in their tracks. Anthropologists have looked at ruins of very ancient cities, the shift of the desert sands, weather patterns in history, and references to old trade routes, to pinpoint where this momentous event might have taken place. Climatologists have observed unexpected dense fogs, and occasional strange wind patterns which can actually 'push' water from one end of a lake to another.

And while we could get lost down these various rabbit trails, I think we might miss the point if we did.

The Chosen People were on the hunt.

They were looking for the Promised Land.

Yes, at this particular moment, they were very, very scared.

And look, here comes trouble.

Couldn't go over it.

Couldn't go under it.

Couldn't go around it.

Had to go through it.

Moses stretched out his hand over the sea.

- And the people went through.
- And the people were saved.

- And the enemy was destroyed.

Moses lifted the staff in his hand, a symbol of his authority, a touchstone of his trust in YHWH, a reminder of the Call he had accepted from God and the promise he had made to see this challenge through; he lifted that staff, and summoned the courage, and opened himself up to that deep trust in God. He commanded the impossible: to move water; to save the Chosen People from certain death or a return to slavery. And the impossible became, somehow, possible.

Moses could not avoid the trouble.

He couldn't go over it.

He couldn't go under it.

He couldn't go around it.

Moses moved through the difficulty, and emerged on the other side: safe, surprised, ready to serve.

My friends, trouble comes to each and every one of us. It might be a little thing. It might be a life changing situation. But there it is: looming in front of us. It appears there is no easy way around it. And after further reflection, there is no way you can avoid it. And try as you might to pull up the covers and pretend it doesn't exist, when morning comes after a sleepless night, it's still there.

Can't go over it.

Can't go under it.

*Can't go around it.
Got to go through it.*

And we don't want to go through.

- We're not sure we'll make it to the other side.
- We're not sure if we're going to like what we find at the other side.
- We don't want to be alone, lost, or forgotten on the other side.

But my friends, you have within you, the courage, and the trust and the understanding of God in your heart. It may not feel like that when you are facing that impossible wall of water. But your God whispers to you:

"Lift your staff! Trust Me. Believe in Me. Remember, "I Am Who I Am." I can move mountains! I can move walls of water. I can do the impossible. And together, we can do this. I've got you. I won't let you fall. Take My hand.

Let's go on a lion hunt.

Amen.