

SERMON

Exodus 14:15-22

Pass through the Waters

Nunawading and Waverley, 22-6-22

Why are you crying out to me, the Lord asked Moses? There may have been moments in your life when you experienced overwhelming anguish. I know that when I struggled for years in pain, I asked the Lord why he had chosen me for this? Shouldn't it have been someone else? I would stop there because I knew such thinking was unkind. I wouldn't want another person to suffer because of me, which is really what our Lord Jesus has done for us. Strangely, in all my pain, hardly no one directed me to the Lord and his plan for my life. They were Christians and should have reassured me about our hope in Christ and his victory over terror and crushing burdens.

Moses and the people were fleeing, shaking in utter terror, with an army on their heels and the water of the Reed Sea before them. Anyone listening to the news will sense the mounting ocean of problems before the nations: the fracturing of our society, the viciousness in politics, the cancel culture, the desire to get richer without concern other nations such as Lebanon and Sri Lanka, war in Ukraine and continual threats and manoeuvrings by autocrats. And now the possibility of recession. There are plenty of reasons for fear in our world today.

What does this ancient event have to say to us, after all, it must say something to us because the apostle Paul likens it to our baptism? It tells us first of all, that Pharaoh's plan crashed into God's plan and was wrecked. Our Father has a purpose at work in all your problems. Often our thinking is quite wrong because we only see what human beings do rather than what our loving Father is planning. You have to go to Christ, to the word of the Spirit in here [the holy Bible] to understand what he is planning. He is planning for us to be stronger so that we can more effective in sharing his love with the world and finally to give us the hope and the guarantee of eternal life.

The people of God have to learn that deliverance comes out of the impossible. Water blocked the Israelites yet out of this water, a path was made for the ex-slaves of Egypt to escape from the tyrant. This is why the apostle Paul could use this event as an analogy for holy Baptism. He wrote: **our ancestors were all under the cloud and they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and**

in the sea. Luther said that the water of baptism is a 'life giving water that gives us the new birth through the Holy Spirit.' We enter the water and we become alive in Christ. When a congregation tries so hard yet seem to be blocked, such as this one, we have to do what God instructed Moses to do: **tell the Israelites to move on.** That is what we learn: move on, keep trying, keep going forward and victory will come just as you have experienced already, in your baptism. Deliverance comes out of the impossible.

Israel failed to believe right up to shore of the Reed Sea. We can understand that weakness of faith. It is why a new covenant had to be given to us through God's Son. If we have to be faithful, committed to the Lord, convinced of his truth, active in doing his will, and people of great trust, we will not make it through the waters. We need the new covenant of Christ. The water of baptism, as in the Reed Sea, stand for what the Lord will do in our lives. Christ received his Father's affirmation at the Jordan River: **this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.** He walked on the water. He commanded fish from the water by the boat load. When he faced the baptism of suffering at the end of his life, he triumphed, striding from the tomb, victorious over death, over evil, over sin, and over the law. We are not strong, that is so true but Jesus is our strength and he has put all this love and strength in our baptism.

Finally, God tests us by putting us under pressure, by allowing us to face deep water. A man who had been financially wrecked by some very corrupt people in high places queried me about this by saying, "Oh, it is character building, is it?" Perhaps I was not listening to his anger and hurt sufficiently. The difficult experience is not about character so much as enduring in the hope of God's miraculous work in our lives. **A prophet once said to God's people: when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.** This is what our baptism is promising us. God has glued his glory, his miracle, and his deliverance on to your person in baptism. They are yours now and it is up to us to claim them for ourselves.