

November 18/19, 2023

**Redemption Song**  
*Exodus: The God Who Delivers Series*  
**Exodus 15:1-21**  
Pastor Ryan Harmon

You know, it wasn't that long ago that I was a little child up on a stage much like this. I'm 44 now, so maybe that does feel like a very long time ago, depending on your age. But it wasn't that long ago that I was on a stage just like this, being dedicated to the Lord the same way that these kids were here this morning. I've grown up in the church, kind of brought up in a faithful church and in a faithful family. And the longer I have walked with God, the longer I have followed Jesus, the more convinced I have become that one of the greatest dangers to our spiritual health, to our spiritual vitality, is our tendency to forget, to become a forgetful people. I think in this moment in 2023, just in the culture that we're in, we are in a particularly dangerous spot to become a forgetful people, people prone to get so caught up in what is new and what is fresh and what is exciting, and what is today, that we forget who God is. We forget what He has done over the course of generations. So the question is, "In a forgetful age—and every age is forgetful in its own way—but in this forgetful age, how do we be people that remember? How do we cultivate a remembrance of what God has done, the way He has rescued us in big ways and in small ways? What does it look like to be a people of remembrance?"

That's what we want to talk about this morning as we continue our study in Exodus. We're going to be in Chapter 15, verses 1 through 21. So, I'd invite you to turn your Bibles there. You'll remember that last week Jeff walked us through Exodus chapter 14, and it was just this climactic moment. We've been building towards it for weeks now. Israel has been in slavery, in bondage, and last week we read about how God led them to the sea and brought them out of Egypt. But then as they stood on the shore of the sea, they had an army pursuing them from one direction, and they had a sea that they could not pass in the other direction, and they were stuck. They were at the end of their rope, hemmed in. What would they do? And God acted. God acted and miraculously brought His people across the sea to the other side and brought the waters down upon the pursuing army. God miraculously delivered His people. So now here, at the beginning of chapter 15, they stand on the far shore—on the other shore—looking back at what God has just done, surely mesmerized, dizzied almost, from just the astounding deliverance He brought about. And in that moment Israel stopped and they remembered. And they remembered in song. And that's what chapter 15 is: the song of redemption of Israel. So, let's read it together. Exodus 15, verse 1:

**Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and said,**

**I will sing to the LORD, for He <sup>is</sup> highly exalted;  
The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea.  
The LORD is my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation;  
This is my God, and I will praise Him;  
My father's God, and I will extol Him.  
The LORD is a warrior;**

**The LORD is His name.**

**“Pharaoh’s chariots and his army He has cast into the sea;**

**And the choicest of his officers are drowned in the <sup>l</sup><sup>l</sup>Red Sea.**

**The deeps cover them;**

**They went down into the depths like a stone. (\*NASB, Exodus 15:1-5)**

If we read this song this morning, you’re going to see that there is a lot of repetition. That’s true of nearly every song we sing. And there’s a reason for that. The repetition is something that is an act, essentially, that imprints this truth on our very hearts. You say it once and you might affirm it, but you say it multiple times, and it starts to kind of sink deep down into your bones and becomes a part of you. And what this song is, at its heart, is this celebratory, triumphant song of praise to their God who has just delivered them miraculously, in a way that only He could. Israel cried out to their God because He saved them. And so in response they said, “Let us stop; let us remember the redemption that God has just brought about on our behalf.”

In these first five verses we just read, you’ll see a theme start to emerge that we actually saw last week. You remember last week as they were stuck, kind of hemmed in, and they were at the end of their rope. And Jeff, as he preached, encouraged us to remember the very thing that Israel had to remember in moments like that, where you feel like there is no way out, what do you do? “*Look up; Eyes up, oh people of God.*” That was the refrain. And here, as we walk through this song, we’ll see this encouragement kind of reinforced over and over again. God is the high and lifted-up One. Israel lifts Him up. “Look up. Let Him be highly exalted.” But what’s more, what’s very clear is that when the high and exalted One acts, well, He brings those who think they’re up, He brings them down low. He humbles the proud. That’s what He just did with Pharaoh in Egypt. It says He threw them down. He cast them down into the sea. Verse 5 says, **The deeps cover them; They went down into the depths like a stone.** And so now Israel—God’s people—people that He just delivered across the sea and brought them up out of the sea, now they turn to the One that brought them up, and they lift Him up. And they say, “May You be highly exalted; I will extol You.” That’s “up” language. “May God be lifted up. May His enemies be brought low.”

Oh, this language of remembrance and this language of “up and down” says something about what God does to His enemies. He brings those who think they are lofty, down low, and that highlights another theme that emerges right there in the center of these first five verses. In verse 3, we’re told that **the LORD is a warrior. The LORD is His name.** Over these past ten weeks, as we’ve been walking through Exodus, that has been very evident. Israel has done nothing throughout this entire episode. God has gone toe to toe with Pharaoh, and He’s brought about a deliverance completely on His own. It was His act; Israel did nothing. And so, maybe as we read that **the LORD is a warrior**, we will nod in kind of affirmation. We’ll say, “Well, yeah, of course; we’ve seen that very clearly.” But we can’t miss the significance of this phrase. Interestingly, this is the only time in the Old Testament that this descriptive word is given to God, that God is a **warrior**. And while that’s true, it’s also true that this theme of the God who fights battles, the God who goes to war on His people’s behalf, is all over the pages of Scripture. It’s by His strength that He accomplishes His purposes. He’s the One that redeemed Israel. Israel did nothing. They were freed solely by God’s act alone. And His people, in this moment, are learning that. They’re beginning to come to terms with the fact that the Lord is their warrior, but they will have more to learn. That’s not a one-time learning. They’re going to have to continue to remember the Lord is the One that fights on

their behalf. But here in this moment, they made that proclamation, that confession, “The LORD is a warrior,” as a statement of faith. “God is the One who fights our battles. Our trust will be in Him and Him alone.” And for Israel, but also for us, it’s an important thing for us to remember. No matter what we’re going through, how incredibly important it is for us to never forget the LORD is the One who fights the battle. That’s why Jesus can say, “You don’t need to retaliate.” Why? Because the LORD fights the battles...the LORD fights the battles. And if we are prone to forget that, if we don’t intentionally stir up that remembrance, what will start to happen is we’ll start to think, “I’m the one that needs to fight. I’m the one that has to conquer. I’m the one that has to take on whatever hardship I’m facing.” And that is a wearying way to live. The LORD is the warrior. The LORD is the One that fights the battles. And so Israel was delivered. They were saved in the light of this dramatic deliverance—dramatic and unimaginable. They stopped, and they sang. They remembered God’s incredible redemption. As the song continues in verse 6, we’re going to see the language change a little bit. They’ve been talking kind of *about God*. Now they’re going to talk *directly to God*. Verse 6:

**“Your right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power,  
Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.  
“And in the greatness of Your excellence You overthrow those who rise up against You;  
You send forth Your burning anger, *and* it consumes them as chaff.  
“At the blast of Your nostrils the waters were piled up,  
The flowing waters stood up like a heap;  
The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.  
“The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;  
My desire shall be gratified against them;  
I will draw out my sword, my hand will destroy them.’  
“You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them;  
They sank like lead in the mighty waters.  
“Who is like You among the gods, O LORD?  
Who is like You, majestic in holiness,  
Awesome in praises, working wonders?  
“You stretched out Your right hand,  
The earth swallowed them. (Vs. 6-12)**

Well, as I said, Israel has been talking about what God has done and giving Him praise, but kind of referring to Him in the third person. The LORD did this; the LORD will be highly exalted. But now in verse 6, they turn their attention directly to God. You, You, LORD, You are the One that delivered us. And that little shift certainly continues to be a confession of praise to God, but it also is a testament to the relationship that God Himself, Yahweh, is forging with His people. This is a personal, intimate relationship. They interact with their God, not far off, not concerned that He’s going to consume them, but they say, “This is our God. You are our God.” And once again, we see them using this dramatic “up and down” language. This dynamic of God is the high and lifted up One, but also He’s the one who lifts things up. He lifted up the waters, so He can hurl it down on the enemies. He sent them into the depths. It says in verse 10, **“They sank like lead in the mighty waters.”**

Right before that statement, in verse 9, we're given a little glimpse of the heart of the Egyptians, and that heart of the Egyptians is really encapsulated. It's kind of characterized by Pharaoh's heart, and we've seen that throughout our study of Exodus. We've talked about Pharaoh's hard heart, his stubborn heart, his willful disobedience, his willful opposition to the God of the entire universe. And when we think about his willful stubborn arrogance, in light of that statement, **"The Lord is a warrior,"** we see the conflict that has been raging kind of clearly in that moment. And Pharaoh and Egypt are unwilling to surrender to that thought. Ultimately, Pharaoh thinks he is the ultimate warrior, and the Egyptian army certainly thought they were the ultimate warriors—"No one more powerful than us." Pharaoh thought he was the highest king. Pharaoh thought he was a god himself. He would not bow down to another god, and therein lead the standoff that existed for fourteen chapters in Exodus. An arrogant heart...a lofty heart...an opposing God kind of heart that says, "I will pursue. I will overtake. I will divide the spoil." Now, what you see in that heart is a heart focused on self, consumed with its own strength, self-praise, pride, self-exultation. "I will lift myself up," that kind of heart. That kind of heart is unable to surrender to the God of the universe, because that kind of heart believes it is God. Ultimately, at the heart of pride is a belief that, "I would do it better than God. I am superior to Him." And that kind of heart is what led to Egypt and Pharaoh's demise, an unwillingness to surrender...an unwillingness to surrender!

And there is a question that all of us must face. Egypt certainly had to face it. Would they surrender to God, or would they think themselves God? And for us? Will we lift ourselves up? Or will we, in our hearts, lift God high? Will we extol Him? Will we lift Him up and exalt Him? Or will we participate in self-exultation? Well, Israel saw that the only reason they were a people was because God acted. He redeemed them. They had done nothing. They cried out to Him, and those who were lifted up, God brought low. And those that were low—Israel enslaved, captive, bondage—well, God raised them up. And so, they, in turn, lifted Him up. It was all Him.

It's such an important little feature of remembrance for us to kind of dwell on for a moment. As people prone to forgetfulness, living in a forgetful age, it's important to remember that this act of remembrance fosters a very deep humility in us, because it helps us to see ourselves accurately. We've done nothing. God did it all. Israel was a people solely because God chose to pull them out of Egypt. It was Him keeping His promises. We, if we are given to Christ, if we are His, we are a people solely because of God's gracious action. We have done nothing. He did it all. Remembering reminds us that we are humble; we are in a lowly estate. It's only that God has lifted us up that we have any reason to say that we have anything going for us. It's all Him. Remembering fosters humility. It helps us see ourselves accurately and see God accurately. To forget who God is, is in a sense to lose ourselves, because we are nothing without Him. And so we want to lift Him up. We want to remember Him.

That's why it was so important for Israel to foster this remembrance. It's why they wrote a song, and they would sing it over the course of generations. If you would open your Bibles this week and just do a study of everywhere this moment of the Exodus occurs, or kind of is alluded to, it would be a rich study for you. It's everywhere. You read the Psalms. It's just covered in this phrasing, in this idea, in this moment of praise. "LORD, we praise You. You brought us out of Egypt." You open the Prophets; it's right there. They were recalling all the time, the fact that God brought them out of Egypt.

Five hundred years later, Israel is once again exiled into Assyria, into Babylon. And Nehemiah leads a group back to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem five hundred years later. And listen to what Nehemiah says in Nehemiah 9, verse 11. He's praying to the LORD and says: **You divided the sea before them, so they passed through the midst of the sea on dry ground; and their pursuers You hurled into the depths, like a stone into raging waters.** Five hundred years later, remember! Don't forget what God has done.

So the question here, at this point in this song, that I'd like to ask you is, "What do you do to cultivate remembrance of who God is and what He has done? How might you, in this week to come, look back and remember the ways that He has brought you out of spots that were too big for you?" As you walked in today, you were handed a card. It's called *Song of Thanksgiving*. Our hope with this is that you would take it, and sometime this week, you would just dwell on it, and you would, in your time alone with God, that you would dwell on what He has done. Think back to a moment, a moment where you thought you were in over your head, and you saw God show up. Just take a moment and reflect on, "What does that say about Him? What does that say about me?" And you? "What does that say about how much He loves you?" How might we foster remembrance? How might we ensure that we are intentional, that we will never forget? Oh, our hope is that as we do that, we will be drawn into praise. We will be drawn into worship. We'll never forget God's mighty hand, God's outstretched arm on our behalf. It doesn't matter if that was sixty years ago when you first learned the plan of salvation and you placed your faith in Jesus Christ, or just last week, where God brought you out of a situation. He led you through and allowed you to walk faithfully in the midst of a difficult circumstance. Whatever it might be, remember Him and remember what that moment says about Him and says about the way that He loves you. Israel looked back. They worshipped. They wrote a song. They remembered, but they didn't stop there. The song continues. Verse 13.

**"In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed;  
In Your strength You have guided *them* to Your holy habitation.**

**"The peoples have heard, they tremble;  
Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia.**

**"Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed;  
The leaders of Moab, trembling grips them;  
All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.**

**"Terror and dread fall upon them;  
By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone;  
Until Your people pass over, O LORD,  
Until the people pass over whom You have purchased.**

**"You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance,  
The place, O LORD, which You have made for Your dwelling,  
The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.**

**"The LORD shall reign forever and ever." (Vs. 13-18)**

Verse 13 marks a shift in the song. Verses 1 through 12 really look back at what God had just done. They remembered who God was. But in verse 13, we see their mind and this song start to shift towards the present moment they were in and towards the future that awaited them. We know, of course, that Exodus isn't done, right? Your Bible has a number of pages left in this chapter, and

we're going to pick it up in January. We're going to continue to walk with Israel, as God is with them, leading them into the Promised Land. The deliverance wasn't the only story. It was deliverance into a future where He would be their God, and they would be His people. And so in this moment, Moses knew and the people knew that. Although God had just delivered them miraculously from the greatest enemy on the planet, there were still enemies out there. The journey was not done. God had brought about this first dramatic act of deliverance. But now, as they stood on that far shore, they anticipated the fact that more enemies were to come. They stood on this Sinai Peninsula, and as they stood on those sandy beaches, they knew there were Edomites; there were Philistines; there were multiple nations in Canaan. But in that moment, in that moment of praise, they were confident. They were confident because their remembrance of what God had done fueled them with confidence and courage for the future that He would bring about. Their remembrance, their unwillingness to forget, fueled them with courage to take the next step of faithfulness, to continue the very journey that He had placed them on.

When we remember, it does something very important for us. See, remembrance of what God has done in the past, bolsters confidence in the future. Remembering God's hand, remembering His ways, remembering the ways that His character showed up, remembering what He thinks of you, allows us to take a next step, to step out into the void, and to take a step of faith, because we know that He does not change. Who He has been, is who He will be.

And so, as they stood on that beach, they looked ahead to what was to come. But they looked ahead confidently because they knew that they stood with Him. It says that they were with Him in His **holy habitation**. That word **habitation** really just stirs up this idea that His presence is with them. Now, ultimately, that idea is going to grow. It's going to find expression later in Exodus, in the tabernacle, in the wilderness, and ultimately, in Jesus Christ. But in this moment, even before a tabernacle had been mentioned, Israel knew that God was with them. He knew that they were in His habitation. They dwelled with Him and because they dwelled with Him, they were confident. God was with them. What did they have to fear? They anticipated all these nations they would encounter: Philistia, Edom, Moab, all of Canaan. And yet they knew that because of God being who He was, these nations would hear and would experience the might of their God and they would melt. They'd become frozen like stone. Why? Is it because Israel is such a powerful army? No! It's because of the One they are with. They are with the God that is a warrior. They are with the One that shall reign forever and ever. And so they took their next steps in confidence. They anticipated all that was to come. And they knew that the God who had delivered them would be faithful to them. God had promised them. He had promised Moses at the outset of this whole story, that, "I will bring a people out, and they will join Me on this mountain, and they will worship Me here at Sinai. And knowing that, they were confident. God's past acts point towards a sure future. His people can walk confidently because He does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Our God does not change; therefore, we can take a next step. We can remember who He was, and we can be emboldened in our courage to step forward. Oh, so often I find myself doing this. I encounter a new moment, a new trial, a new struggle, and so often what I find my heart crying out is, "Lord, You have got to give me something fresh. You have to give me a new word. I need some new encouragement to remind me that You're faithful." But what it seems that Scripture tells us to do, so often, is to look back and look up, and remember who God is, and step out in faith, knowing

that He is who He says He is. He will continue to be who He has been. He will not leave us. He will not forsake us.

So, what are you facing? What struggle awaits you? This is Thanksgiving week. Perhaps this is a hard week for you. I know, for so many people, it's a week of celebration. For many others it is a lonely week. Or what might it look like to remember this week the way God has cared for you? Or His love for you, or His presence with you? Then to take steps forward into a difficult week believing that He will once again meet you, because that is who He is. Remembrance of the past gives birth to courage in the present and into the future. As we come to verse 19, we realize that verse 18 was formally kind of the end of the song. So what we encounter in verse 19 is like this wrapping up of the story. But then also we're given a little glimpse in verses 20 and 21 of this celebratory moment that Israel found itself in. Verse 19:

**For the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them, but the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea.**

**Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. Miriam answered them,**

**"Sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted;  
The horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea." (Vs. 19-21)**

A number of scholars believe that Miriam is actually the author of this song, but we can't say with any confidence that's true. Some people say it's Moses. Other people say it was a team of writers that just acknowledged this and wrote these songs for Israel. We don't know for sure. But what we do know for sure is that Israel was on the precipice. They were on the cusp of a brand new, joyous moment. They looked in the rearview mirror, and they couldn't believe where they had just come from, and they anticipated all that God was going to do. And so they sang and they danced. And this wasn't somber singing and somber dancing. This was full-bodied praise—heart, soul, mind, strength—grabbing tambourines and shaking them while dancing. The kind of worship that might make some of us uncomfortable, right? They were full of joy—exuberant and overwhelmed. Then as we get to verses 20 and 21, we see that Miriam answers with a near verbatim kind of repetition of verse 1, and clearly that indicates that this song became a song that was repeated over and over for the people of Israel. In fact, a number of scholars believe that in the entire Old Testament, this is probably the oldest song, or even it kind of feels like a psalm. It's the oldest prayer song ever written. And in a beautiful way, the author, as we close this section of Exodus, brings to mind all the faithful women of Israel as they come out to dance and respond to their God.

Do you remember how Exodus began? Those women faithfully resisting a corrupt Pharaoh, those midwives that stood up and stood for their God. And now as this scene closes, once again the women come forth, and they offer up praise to their God, and they sing this ancient song of remembrance. They remembered that they might praise their God and glorify Him. They remembered that they might have that imprinted on their very hearts and souls, that it might forge their identity as a people, and they remembered that they might walk confidently into the future.

We live in a forgetful age, and as much as we try to not be conformed to the patterns of this world, we just have to admit there are times where we start to look a little bit like the world we're in. And so, we have to ask ourselves, "Have we become forgetful? Have we ceased to intentionally come together and remember who God is, and remember what He's done? Because, oh Church—brothers and sisters—this needs to be a regular thing for us. Remembrance can't be a one-time thing. It can't be a, "We'll do it at the holidays kind of thing," or "I'll do it at the New Year" kind of thing. It needs to be an "all the time" thing, constantly fostering remembrance, because it seems as though the tide is against it. So, we need to step out with intentionality. In a countercultural way, we will say we will be a people who remember our God because we remember too rarely; we forget all too often.

For the last three months or so, we've talked a number of times about, "Why do we gather?" and really, as we close this part of Exodus, and we talk about remembrance, it's a good reminder once again, why we gather. Every week when we gather together, we remember, don't we? That's what we do together. We've done it this morning. We remember in song. We lift up songs of praise to God that are statements of His character, statements of His acts in the past. For each one of us as we sing certain parts of those lyrics, I am confident that God brought to mind ways that that has been true in your very life. We remember each week when we gather. We remember in song. We remembered earlier this morning as we saw all of these families up here. The stage was full of all these families who are trying to foster in their precious little ones a spirit of remembrance. They want these children to grow up remembering who God is, remembering what Jesus Christ has done for them. We, as a body, long to be a body that has generations that are marked by remembrance. We want to never forget.

Two weeks ago, we celebrated baptism. What is that but a celebratory remembrance? We visually kind of represented what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross and the fact that, in faith, we have been buried with Him and risen to newness of life. We remember; we mark these moments. Every time we drink of the cup and eat the bread, just as we did three weeks ago, we remember. Oh, we remember what Jesus Christ did for us on that night. We remember Him. We lift Him up in praise for doing for us what we could never do for ourselves, and we remember. We remember that what He has done for us tells us something very deep about who He is, because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He promises us that in Christ, He will never leave us. He will never forsake us. We remember in order to glorify Him. We remember in order to think of ourselves rightly, to look at ourselves accurately and remember that we are a people who are absolutely dependent. We can't do anything on our own. We need the power of God active in our life, no matter what we're doing. Whether it be in business or at home, or in our families, we need God. Let us never forget. So, we remember. We remember, and our remembrance stirs up courage to take steps of faith into the future.

For each one of us, oh, we know there are battles on the horizon. Small as they might seem, they are significant to each one of us. And so we remember. We remember, knowing that God is a warrior. He is the one who fights the battles. And so we step forward in faith, believing that who He has been is who He will be. And so we step forward with courage. We remember that Jesus Christ is the high and lifted up One. He is the One who reigns forever and ever. Therefore, we can be a confident people, children of the King, walking with Him through this life, anticipating the promise that is to come, and that He will surely deliver. Let's pray together.



*Our Father, we do remember. We remember You. Oh, Lord, let our minds never drift, never drift too long from who You are. The way that You have saved us, who You have made us to be, what You have done for us in Christ, Lord Jesus, we remember You. We remember the agony of the cross, but also the victory of Your resurrection. As people now living as new creations, seated in the heavenlies next to You, our life doesn't even make sense to us because we are people that are living this eternal kind of life. We can't even grasp it. And so we remember, in praise of what You have done. You have ushered us into a promise that we can barely fathom...and we remember it. We remember it and we praise You. Lord, we ask, by Your Spirit, let us never forget, even this week. Let it be a week full of remembrance of You, that it might be a week full of praise and worship. So we pray these things, gratefully, in the name of Your Son, Amen.*

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