

Exodus 14:10-14,19-end: Red Sea All Age (14 September 2014)

Famous journeys – can you name? (SLIDE)

Dangerous journeys en vogue – TV series – like this one (SLIDE – Bolivia – Top Gear and World’s Most Dangerous Roads)

Difficult journeys – who has experienced one of these? (SLIDE) Any recent experience this summer?

Most famous journey of them all – Exodus. Last week – Passover – blood of lamb saved people – Pharaoh let them go. So they flee – so quickly that no time to put yeast in bread (hence Unleavened bread at Passover). But Pharaoh changes mind and sends army after them. And they find themselves stuck (SLIDE) – do they drown in the sea, die of hunger and thirst in desert, or at hands of mighty Egyptian army?

Who can rescue them?

Back to our difficult journeys (SLIDE) – what sorts of rescue? (SLIDE)

But for Israelites (SLIDE)

What follows is one of the great rescue acts: God parts the Red Sea and the Israelites escape. Usually pictured like this (SLIDE) – night not day; no ‘wall of water’ but a wind which parted sea. Interesting viewpoint (SLIDE) - READ

What can we learn from this episode? Some S’s

Stand... see... be still (v13-14) (SLIDE) – situation in which Israelites were powerless – only God could rescue – some situations same for us today. Might feel like Israelites stuck in middle (SLIDE) Only three options: despair, panic or prayer and trust – stand, be still and see... wait on God

Stretched... drove the sea back... went through the sea (v21-22) SLIDE – when God acts, we journey with him. We don’t stay where we are, he leads us on. We may be powerless to save ourselves, but when rescue comes, we need to journey. Spiritual life: 2 main themes of moment and journey. SLIDE God breaks in at particular moments – and yet we still journey. See here at Red Sea. And for us: the literal journey here becomes our spiritual journey.

Saved (v30) (**SLIDE**) – defining moment – nation became a nation, and one who knew that God was really God with all that power, but who also loved them, and rescued them and would be with them.

Looks forward to another defining moment, another rescue. Follow chronology – lamb sacrificed at 3pm on day of Passover, then overnight Passover happened and Israelites told to go and do that day and then Egyptian army pursues them and catches them by nightfall where they camp by Red Sea (2nd night in narrative). The waters part and the Israelites cross in the latter part of the night. Early on 3rd morning (v27 daybreak) the sea comes together again, engulfs the Egyptians and the Israelites are saved.

So the lamb is sacrificed at the 9th hour, and on the 3rd day early in the morning another miracle happens, the victory is won and people are saved. Is that starting to ring any bells?

Story of Jesus is story of a new exodus (uses word in Luke during story of Transfiguration) – where God saves his people, not from literal slavery to a evil ruler, but from spiritual captivity to what bible calls sin – i.e. our tendency to rebel against God, to live separate from him. Jesus takes that journey on our behalf, to win our freedom.

And those who follow Jesus are joined *with him* in that journey: the journey of freedom, of rescue, of becoming part of God's people. The story of Exodus is our story too. We refer to it in baptism. We mark it every time we share communion. We are people of the Exodus. (**SLIDE**)

We face big things in life which we can't beat ourselves and all we can do is turn to God in prayer and God says: Stand, see, be still. (**SLIDE**)

We journey through the sea and out the other side – though the next part of the story reminds us that even after that God's people still carry huge frailties and doubts. We are changed, yes – but not completely. (**SLIDE**)

And we are saved (**SLIDE**) – not just to stay in the desert, but to journey on with God's people, the long walk to freedom. And it is a long journey, isn't it? (PAUSE)

What's your Red Sea today? What journey is God asking you to take, in faith and trust? What barrier do you need to cross?

Perhaps it's the journey of believing in Jesus for the first time. Deep down you're not sure you want to be rescued, you're fearful of the changes it will bring. You're not that keen with life on this side of the shore with the army of pressures bearing down on you – but you know that life on the other side of the shore will have consequences. Are you willing to cross through the sea today? Maybe you are, in which case: go for it! Or maybe your prayer is just: make me willing to be willing. Help me to want this journey, to take the step of faith.

Perhaps it's some major life event, and you need God's intervention. You might be waiting at the shore, or you might be at the point of needing to journey into the unknown, a new reality. Maybe what you need to hear is simply this: God's people have done this before; Jesus has too.

Or perhaps it's some doubt or spiritual barrier. Is God good? Is he strong enough? Can I forgive that person? Can I be forgiven for that? Exodus is one of those stories woven into the life of God's people not just as a single moment, but because life is a series of seas we have to cross through. Each time, we can't do it without God's power and presence. But each time it is a step towards freedom, even if the promised land is some way away.

Opportunity to respond – walk through your own Red Sea (EXPLAIN) – music will play. Don't have to – about you. If need to mark something, chance to mark it.

(PLAY 'YOU ALONE CAN RESCUE' CD TRACK 4)