**Exodus: Two Narratives by Thailer Jimerson**

*“a certain kind of poetry seems to go with a certain kind of theology.”*

(C.S. Lewis)

Something I had mentioned in prior sermons in this series through Exodus concerned two major narratives, or worldviews, being promoted. There is Pharaoh’s polytheistic worldview that leads to the kind of life he leads. And there is Moses’s monotheistic revelation which leads to an alternative value system and way of living. I want to take some time here to elaborate in a way that might not be possible in a sermon just to make sure everyone is on the same page.

**A Radical View**

In Exodus, there is a categorical shift in the level of God’s revelation of himself. Because of the “lullaby effect” (which I’ve mentioned in previous classes), we’ve grown too familiar and ultimately desensitized to just how radical Moses’ vision of God was in Exodus 5.1. A God who gives his personal name, gives a name to this nation of bottom-rung slaves, and wants to celebrate with them in the wilderness? This would’ve translated as theological nonsense to Pharaoh, so Moses begins to shift his tactic to speak in a language Pharaoh can understand in Exodus 5.3. But it’s not just a different kind of God Moses is revealing; no, there are consequences that affect the fabric of reality. If this God truly exists, a new social reality is made possible: one where even these slaves have rights, purpose, and are valued.

Consider Walter Brueggemann: *“The radical break of Moses and Israel from imperial reality is a two-dimensioned break from both the religion of static triumphalism and the politics of oppression and exploitation. Moses dismantled the religion of static triumphalism by exposing the gods and showing that in fact they had no power and were not gods. Thus, the mythical legitimacy of Pharaoh's social world is destroyed, for it is shown that such a regime appeals to sanctions that in fact do not exist. The mythic claims of the empire are ended by the disclosure of the alternative religion of the freedom of God. In place of the gods of Egypt, creatures of the imperial consciousness, Moses discloses that Yahweh, the sovereign one who acts in his lordly freedom, is extrapolated from no social reality and is captive to no social perception but acts from his own person toward his own purposes.” (p.6, The Prophetic Imagination)*

**Stories We Tell**

Brueggemann is saying that with the revelation of this new-to-Pharaoh God “YHWH” came also a delegitimizing of the power of Pharaoh’s gods and made possible the value system that God desires. This relates to us because *Who God I*s is inextricably connected to *Who We Are*. “You are what you worship” and other trite sayings have pervaded our mind – but they’re true. We act out the character and stories of our faith.

**The Prophetic Task**

Taking Moses as our example, as the prophet par excellence, we move toward a similar task today. We are storied creatures, living out narratives and worldviews, organizing our entire lives around a value system rooted in faith. Even those who claim no faith live by a value system that cannot by sustained by a purely empirical, rationalistic worldview. The question is are these value systems humanizing or dehumanizing in nature? Are they in accord with God’s vision of reality or on a collision course with what he values? What are we to do? “The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.” (Brueggemann, p.3)