

**If You But Trust in God to Guide You**

***The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey."***

You may recall the days when the King James Version and the old *Lutheran Hymnal* were the standards in our churches. The Sundays in Lent had these difficult Latin names. We couldn't call them "First Sunday in Lent, Second Sunday in Lent, etc." Rather, they were called, "Invocavit, Reminiscere, Oculi, Laetare, etc. Sundays." That is because each Sunday of Lent had a special theme that dated way back to before Martin Luther when Latin was the language of the church. Today is the Third Sunday in Lent but traditionally this has been called, "Oculi." Oculi is Latin for "eyes" and this Third Sunday in Lent usually concentrated on how the eyes of the Lord are looking on us and how we are to keep our eyes on the Lord.

We may not call today "Oculi" Sunday, but our Old Testament reading definitely fits that theme: God keeps his eyes on us. Because he does, let's keep our eyes on him and do what we just sang in our sermon hymn: let's put our trust in God to guide us. He keeps his eye on us and promises to help and deliver us.

*I. The Lord sees our trouble.*

Ever walked into a room where there was a painting of someone on the wall, and no matter where you go in that room, the eyes of that painting are always looking at you? That is the feeling the Lord wants us to have. ***"I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering."***

You call someone on the phone. How long will you let the phone ring before concluding no one is home and hanging up? Four times? Six times? Ten times? We have to give the Israelites credit in our text. They had been enslaved by the Egyptians and they obviously prayed to God for deliverance. How long were they praying? At least 80 and probably well over a hundred years. Just think of it. One generation prayed to God for help and they died still as slaves. Another generation prayed and they, too, died without seeing their deliverance. A third generation prayed to him and after many years still no deliverer. You would think they would have given up long ago. They didn't. I pray we all imitate their persistent prayer life.

But it wasn't as if God was "not home" or too busy to answer their prayers. He heard them. He saw their misery. And now he was raising up a deliverer for them--Moses. God hears our prayers, every one of them. He sees what we are experiencing every moment. He sees every hurt feeling, every ache, every pain we have. But he also knows when best to answer our prayers, and how.

We have to remember that the Lord sees more than we do. A blind man is asked to go into a room where there is also an elephant. He has no idea what an elephant is. He grabs hold of the elephant's trunk and concludes that an elephant must be long and snake-like. Like the blind man, we see so little and often reach the wrong conclusions. But the Lord sees the entire picture. Listen to our epistle reading once again: ***"And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."*** God sees more than we do. He sees the devil and he knows the devil's every move. He knows when the devil will tempt you and with what kind of temptation. God also sees your limits. So the Lord puts a chain around the devil and limits him. Who knows how many hardships and temptations the Lord has kept out of our lives, but when he allowed them, he limited them and intends them for our good.

The Lord also sees the maturity of your faith and knows what you need most. He knows when you need hardship to strengthen your faith or a soothing word of comfort. Our sight is so narrow. We see only the pain, temptation, our weakness. But the Lord who knows exactly how many hairs we have on our head. He knows exactly what each of us is going through at any given moment and answers every prayer according to what we need most.

So why did God wait eighty or a hundred years or more before answering the prayers of his people? Why did he wait for Moses? I don't know. But I do know the Lord who knows and sees all things; his eyes are on us.

*II. He will help and deliver us.*

But the Lord is more than a casual observer; he is concerned about us and promises to deliver us. But first we must learn and understand that we need the Lord totally for everything.

You know the story. The Egyptians were so afraid of the Israelites that they not only enslaved them, they also ordered that all newborn males be thrown into the Nile River in an attempt to limit the population. Instead of letting her new son drown, Moses' mother ingeniously constructed a watertight basket and set him afloat on it. Pharaoh's daughter found him and took him as her own son. Moses' life was spared. But he was also spared the harsh life of slave as he lived in the luxury of Pharaoh's royal family. We are not told, but I wonder if Moses felt very guilty. I mean, so many babies were killed and yet he

was spared. "Why me? Why should I have survived?" Besides, he lived in luxury while his people suffered. But we do know why. God had a plan and purpose for Moses. Moses' problem was he tried to take matters into his own hands.

Moses was still an Israelite and he was sympathetic towards his own people. Now Moses decided he was going to free his people. He took matters into his own hands. He saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. Moses looked around and when he saw no one, he killed that Egyptian. The self-appointed deliverer had struck his first blow. But when Pharaoh heard about it, he ordered his death and so Moses fled for to Midian. There he met a shepherd by the name of Jethro and started to work for him, eventually marrying his daughter.

God taught Moses a lesson. Yes, that's right, God taught him a lesson. Moses tried to take matters in his own hands and ended up running for his life. So the Lord humbled him. Forty years later, when he was 80 years old, God came to him in the burning bush and said, "OK, Moses, it is now time for you to deliver my people." We no longer see a Moses who was ready to conquer the world. Instead, Moses hid his face before God. He offered up one excuse after another. Only when he was assured of God's faithful help, only then did he go.

That's a lesson we all need to learn. It says in James 4: ***"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."*** The economy is good. We have plans for the future. We think we are in control of things. We sinfully brag about our accomplishments. How easy it is to forget the hand that feeds us. We succeed only because God grants us success.

But did you notice how James stuck the phrase in here, ***"Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins?"*** In our bragging we not only forget the hand the feeds us, we actually bite it. We have bitten God's hand with our sins. We have not been that good of a neighbor or worker or parent or child. The only bragging we can make is how sinful we can be.

But that is exactly what the Lord wants us to see. The Lord wants us to raise our eyes to him with a broken and contrite heart. He wants us to see we are lost and condemned creatures who need his help. And when we look at the Lord, what do we see? We see a Lord looking on us with compassion. The process is called redemption, the buying back, and it was not easy. God bought us back by sending his Son, the deliverer who offered up his own death for the death our sins demanded. He accepted hell itself instead of us. Even the price for admission to heaven, a perfect, holy life, he paid. He bought us and now we belong to God.

But now we see God through the cross. We see a God who has delivered us from our sin. Moses did not know how the Savior would save him on a cross, but he was looking at God through that cross. A few centuries later this same Moses appeared with Elijah before Christ, talking about his coming death. Moses saw God through the cross. Yes, Moses delivered the Israelites from slavery with the Lord's help. But it is God who delivers us all from the slavery of sin and death and hell.

If a teacher or a police officer were watching you closely, you would feel uncomfortable. But if a parent or a teacher or a police officer were watching you closely because they knew you were in trouble, then we would feel protected. That is the feeling the Lord wants us to have. His eyes are upon us. Now put your eyes on the Lord. As we sang in our hymn, if you but trust to guide you, he will all the way to heaven. INJ Amen.