

We are starting a new series through the Book of Exodus. It'll take us all the way to Advent, with a few interruptions in between. So, we're beginning a long journey, and to do so, let's begin with Bono, a name synonymous with rock and roll. The frontman of the legendary band, U2, and a follower of Jesus since the band's inception. They met at a youth group at a young age, but they almost didn't become a band because the Edge, the lead guitarist, wanted to be a Christian missionary. Bono talked him into at least recording one album, and the rest is history.

But from those early days, they sought to serve both Jesus and their calling to music. Specifically, Bono's passion to serve the poor became a central driving force. It was in those early days, as they were following Jesus that they developed a heart for the poor, and no matter if it was leading festivals or working in opening for conferences like Amnesty International or trips to Ethiopia, their faith began to inform their desire to impact the global issue of poverty. A close listener to their music may hear remnants of this from songs like "Where The Streets Have No Name," which is really a prayer and reflection about their time in Ethiopia, or songs of protests like "Sunday, Bloody Sunday."

In his recent memoir entitled *Surrender: 40 Songs, One Story*, Bono opens his book with this quote. "I can't change the world, but I can change the world in me." He spoke these words in 1982 before a concert in Dublin, Ireland. Here, we see the young Bono wrestling with this tension. He looks at the grand scope of the issues in the world and says, "I can't change those, but maybe I can do something inside of me which will bring heaven and earth closer together." Certainly, this began to fuel the resume of his work in the world. Not perfect. Certainly not, but Bono has spent much of his fame attempting to spend it on the least of these.

However, later in that memoir, he reflects with this quote from 1994, "I can change the world, but I can't change the world in me." A little bit older, 12 years later, Bono's reflecting now on the tension that is all of the issues within the world externally, but yet, when he sought to change the world in him, what he found was a deeper issue.

He found showing up for the poor was, in some ways, the easier work. He could do that. He could move the needle a little bit. But for Bono, the dynamics of fame and all that came with it proved to be a troubled tension within his own soul. Whether it was struggling to keep his feet on the ground as his fame spread worldwide, whether it was his propensity to drink too much, or

simply to resist the pull from having to be on the road and not be as present as a father and a husband as he would have liked.

What he found is as tackling the poverty in the external world, there was a deeper poverty within the internal world of him as well. And it's this tension of both the external struggle of the world and the internal struggle of the world, that we all experience and face. It's one thing to be liberated from the external problems, but it's another to be liberated from the internal turmoil that's within us.

Whether it's the thought patterns, the coping mechanisms, the trust structures we develop over the years, the trauma that we've buried so deep within us that continues to give shape to our lives in the here and now, the disordered loves and the lie, believing that we can control all problems, that this is the solution to our pain. While the world may be enslaved on the outside, so, too, the world on the inside of all of us is enslaved. What we need is a liberation. We need to be freed from both the external realities and those tensions that we feel, as well as a deeper liberation.

Exodus is always twofold. It's always been twofold. The Exodus is the story that we've subtitled in this series, *Redemption, Their Story, and Our Story* because it's the story not only of a people so long ago but of the story of you and me as well. Exodus is the founding story of liberation and redemption, of God freeing a people from 400 years of slavery under the tyranny of Pharaoh. Yet it also spends time, years, and generations working on the internal slavery that the people of Israel also experienced.

It's a story of liberation. An external world so broken that God would need to intervene and come in to break the very real chains of slavery within these people, but also an internal liberation that's needed as well. God brought the people out of Egypt, but he also had to get Egypt out of the people. The Exodus is the backdrop of all stories. It's the story of God entering in and rescuing a people when it seemed like they didn't have any hope.

What we find as we walk through this Book of Exodus is that we, too, are caught in our own Egypt. Whether external or internal, we experience that same tension that Bono had of changing the world but not being able to change the world in us. Then maybe some of us are reflecting on the thought, "I can't change the world, but I can change the world in me." That tension that we live in is the tension of what life is all about. That's been the human condition since the beginning.

I want us to contextualize where this story of Exodus is, what it's all about, and tell the story in microform because what we find

in the microform of Exodus is the macro story of the entire Bible. Remember the melody that we talked about a few weeks ago that scripture seems to have this consistent theme of creation, enslavement, liberation, and renewal? That melody repeats over and over and over, and it becomes most clear here in the Book of Exodus. Many scholars consider Genesis a preface to the Bible and Exodus the first book of the Bible. This story of Exodus is about a particular people in a particular time, and it's all of our stories over and over and over again.

We will situate the story of Exodus, both within the scriptures as well as in our lives, and I want to do so through a few different ways. First, Exodus is about their past. We'll begin by looking backward. But when it's about their past, it's also about our future. It's not just about their past and the future, what's unique about this story is the bridge between their past and our future is Jesus. Exodus is about their past, about Jesus, and our future.

Now, a few things about the Book of Exodus. It's referenced throughout the Bible more than any other book from the Old Testament if you consider it through the prophets, Psalms, poetry, and the New Testament letters. It's a story that depicts and illustrates the very character and personhood of who Yahweh, this God, is. It is the story of scriptures told in microform, but one about a much larger story. Let's begin by looking at their past.

These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulon and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt. Exodus 1:1-5

For an epic story, the opening line could use a little work. Many of you were not leaning in waiting for the next verse out of this. But if you had been the original listeners, you would have had a much different experience. Let's explore why. The first thing we miss is that the English translators have cleaned up the first word to just start with "these." But if you look at the original language, it begins with "And these." English teachers would tell you that you should never start a sentence with the word "and." Certainly, you probably shouldn't start an epic book with the word "and." So, let's assume there's some intentionality.

The reality is the translators are doing something here because it's clunky for us to start with "and," but the original writers of the Bible were very intentional. This word not only starts the book of Exodus, but it also starts Leviticus and Numbers. Why? They're trying to both overtly and covertly remind us that this story is a part of a larger story. By beginning with the word "and," they're linking the book of Exodus with the end of Genesis in a way that says that this is all one thing. Exodus is explicitly and without question a sequel to the Book of Genesis. Exodus picks up right where Genesis ends.

Look at this in Exodus 1:1 and Genesis 46:8. These are the names of the sons of Israel, Jacob and his descendants, who went to Egypt. The author is inherently linking these stories. In Genesis 46, what follows this section is a large family tree, a genealogy of which names do you think? Ruben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, Benjamin, Dan, Neftali, Gad, and Asher. The same names that the book of Exodus begins to list out of verse 1. The beginning of Exodus picks up at the end of Genesis without question, the authors of Exodus are framing their story as a continuation of what's happening within Genesis. But the opening verses of Exodus give us even more.

Now Joseph and all his brothers and all his generation died, but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them. Exodus 1:6-7

I've given you a hint at a few important words that are underlined—fruitful, increased, and filled. Those words should sound familiar. Go to Genesis 1:28. This is at the end of the creation story. What's known as the creation mandate in which God is blessing the humanity and giving them this charge in all of creation. The beginning of Exodus and the beginning of the people of Israel in this story is a continuation of the story of humanity that began in Genesis 1.

What we're seeing here is the same beginning. What began in Genesis in an idyllic garden in which God had said, go and flourish, be fruitful, increase, build a world with me; at the beginning of Exodus, we see some of that fulfilled. They had gone, they were fruitful, they had increased, and they had multiplied and filled the earth.

It is a continuation, a story that doesn't begin with brokenness and sin, just like it didn't in Genesis. In Genesis, the world was created good, there was flourishing, and all of this was taking off until that scheming Satan that serpent entered into the scene and wreaked all sorts of havoc. But the story in Genesis begins with a man named Adam.

In Hebrew, the word Adam is *adham*, which means man. The word for dirt is *adamah*. It's a play on words. It's saying this Adam is a dirt creature. But the word Adam is both a name, as we see it and think of it now, but it's also the Hebrew word for humanity, for man. The name Eve is the same Hebrew word for life. You have humanity and life in the garden. The Book of Genesis is about a person, yes, but it's about much more. By using the name *adham*, God is signaling that this is a story about an individual, but it's also a story about all of humanity. It's about you and me. It's a story about the very human condition. God creates *adham* and this is the beginning of the story.

The author of Exodus intentionally draws our imaginations back to Genesis because he reminds us of the story of Exodus, just like the story of Genesis is about a particular people in a particular

place. It's also about all people in all places at the same time. The author of Exodus goes to incredible lengths to ensure that we see this connection. When the original listeners heard "these are the names," and they filled the earth and multiplied, they would have leaned in and said, "Wait a minute, this story is that story. It's the same story, a continuation of that."

Exodus Is about Humanity

The Exodus story is about all of humanity. It's about everyone, everywhere at all times that need both this external and this internal liberation. The Exodus narrative is the backdrop of all of human history. It is everywhere and always the story, the melody that pulses beneath the surface of the scriptures and the created order.

One author, Northrop Frye, says, "Exodus is the only thing that ever happens in the Bible." Over and over, we're being freed and liberated just like these people of God will be. It's the Bono tension resolved and upended. It's that tension of the external and the internal, all of it, finding its footing within this God, this Exodus God. But in all of that goodness, verse 8 interrupts us quite abruptly. "*Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt*" (v. 8). This verse interrupts this beautiful flow in which your mind and imagination are thinking of the beauty of Genesis 1 with all of its Shalom and all of its flourishing. All of a sudden, there's a new King, and the whole story of Joseph being emblematic of all the people of Israel meant nothing to him.

The interruption here, if you were to read on links us with Genesis 3, which is the story of the serpent, the deceiver who comes in. "It says that this king deals shrewdly and is crafty." That's the language that described the snake in the Garden of Eden. It's mirroring the interruption of Genesis 3, the brokenness that unfolds, and this new king, this Pharaoh, was one that was quite cruel; we will learn that in a few weeks. One who led again with this craftiness, the scheming, not towards the flourishing, not towards the filling and multiplying and subduing the earth, but rather the oppression, the enslavement, and the brokenness of the world.

The writer of Exodus is cluing in all of its readers from all time that this story is fundamentally about you and me. It points back to Genesis because Genesis is the fundamental story of all creation and Exodus is its continuation.

Exodus Is About Jesus

That brings us to the second point. Exodus is about Jesus, who links us to our future. Let's do a tour of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to see the way the biblical writers understand Exodus as Jesus' story. You'll see some remnants. I'm going to go quick here, and that's part of the plan. I want to flood you with the imagery in which the gospel writers understand and overlay the story of Jesus with the story of Exodus. So let's begin in Matthew.

In the first five chapters of Matthew, he replays the highlight reel of Exodus quite clearly. Jesus was born into a world that was under tyrannical threat. The angel of the Lord calls Joseph and instructs him to escape to Egypt. So, the story of Jesus begins in Egypt. Of course, the story of Exodus also begins in Egypt. Shortly after that, Matthew describes the baptism of Jesus in which the Holy Spirit will baptize Jesus through fire and water. This is a direct allusion to that of the Red Sea, in which, in Exodus, we watch the people of God walk through the Red Sea as it's split by God and led by fire through the waters.

After they get to the other side of the Red Sea, what do the people of Israel do? They wander in the desert for forty years. In Matthew, right after Jesus' baptism, he details how Jesus went out into the wilderness for 40 days. After returning from that, Matthew situates Jesus beginning his preaching ministry in which he climbs up this mountain to deliver his most brilliant sermon of all time, the Sermon on the Mount. It was at Mount Sinai that in Exodus, the people of God went up this great mountain and received a teaching, a law that would instruct them on how to be human on the other side of slavery. Jesus, as he would give this sermon, would often say, "You've heard that it was said, but I say to you." Jesus is giving a new law, a new instruction, very similar to that of Moses on Mount Sinai.

John says it well in his gospel in chapter 1:17, "*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*" It is the same link, the same connection, the same pivotal moment. Mount Sinai is an incredibly important moment in the Book of Exodus because it transitions from the first liberation, the external world in which the people of God were delivered and rescued out of slavery, but at Mount Sinai is where they begin the internal liberation.

Exodus and slavery had been so ingrained into those people for 400 years that they were not just externally enslaved; they were internally enslaved. It's here that we begin to understand the law when we situate it within the context of Exodus because the law was life-giving. It meant here's how to be human again. You've had generations upon generations of not being human, of being dehumanized in slavery. The law was the gift of God that taught them how to be human again. It was freedom. Of course, it got distorted. That's why we had Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount to reset that. Where Moses brought the law, Jesus brought grace and truth.

In the Gospel of Mark, there is the Mount of Transfiguration scene, in which Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up this mountain, and Jesus is transfigured in their sight. The text says he was glowing, and his appearance was so bright, whiter than anyone could bleach anything. It was this dazzling white. And in the Exodus story, when Moses was on Mount Sinai, he came down the mountain, and he was glowing so much, he had to cover his face before the people.

The Mount of Transfiguration is interesting for a few reasons. Second, do you remember Moses being told he would never enter the promised land? He was to lead the people right up to the precipice but wouldn't enter in. But where is the Mount of Transfiguration? It's in the promised land. And who appears before Peter, James, and John, and Jesus, but Elijah and Moses. Moses did make it into the promised land, but it was only through Jesus that he got there.

The Mount of Transfiguration and Mount Sinai are clear illusions. A little bit later, we see it most clearly with the Passover meal. Moments before Jesus is about to be arrested and go to the cross, they're enjoying this meal that was looking back at the story of Exodus. And when they got to the part of the meal in which they would remember the Passover lamb, Jesus stood and broke the bread and said, "This is my body, which is broken for you."

In Exodus, the blood of the lamb covered the doorposts that rescued and saved them from the plagues that were being thrown on the people of Egypt, the blood of the lamb is that which saved them. And Jesus says, "This is my body, which is broken for you."

In the Gospel of Luke, the author of Luke spends the most time on the birth of Jesus, and he mirrors the birth of Moses. In Exodus, the story of Moses is a child hidden in a basket sent down the river to avoid the genocide from an insecure tyrant. The story of Jesus is a baby hidden in secrecy in a manger who's on the run from another insecure tyrant who's trying a genocide on all the baby boys.

But I like John. John's the creative of the group. He's the poet. John opens his gospel with, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." The Greek word for dwelling is the exact same word that the Greek people would use to say the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle in the Exodus story was this tent, this meeting place of God where heaven and earth overlap. As they were wandering the desert, they had no way to connect with God, no synagogue to go to, and the Tabernacle was given as the overlap of that space in which they were able to encounter the very presence of God in the wilderness.

John said that the Word, Jesus, became flesh and tabernacled among us. In the same way, the Tabernacle was the way in which the people of God encountered God's presence, so too, Jesus is for us, in the New Testament, how we encounter the very presence of God. It's only through Jesus. The Exodus is about the past because it is their story, but it's also our story. However, Exodus is about Jesus because Jesus is the center of all of the stories. So, the Exodus is about their past and Jesus.

Exodus Is About Our Future

The Exodus is about our future. It's one story told in microform, but it's really about the large story. As we just learned through our series of scripture, The Habit of Scripture, the whole story

is pointing to Jesus. It's all connected—Genesis to Revelation—telling one story across centuries with different authors in different books. To look at how this story is also about our future, let's go to Romans 8. Paul is talking about this grand story.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. Romans 8:18-21

Paul looked at this grand scope and he, like Bono, understood the tension that the whole creation is subjected to frustration. It's the new king who was in place to whom Joseph meant nothing. The serpent comes in, and devastation unravels the whole story. When we get to Romans 8, it's very much the feeling you and I get, whether that's the breakdown of relationships, whether that's mass shootings, whether that's a war in the Middle East, whatever it is, we experience the creation mourning. Whether that's tornadoes or natural disasters in which it appears that the world is just fractured at its core, creation was subject to frustration.

What the creation needs, according to Paul, is to be liberated from its bondage of decay. What's another word for liberated? Exodus. All of creation is waiting for the Exodus. All of the story of human history is moving towards Exodus. Exodus is the grand sweeping story and at the very heart of it is humanity and God and creation itself. Each part of that story is longing and looking for a God who will bring about Exodus. God is in the process of liberation for all of creation. But not in a way that's whisking us to some glad morning, some other place in some other distant time. It's about an exodus that's leading and liberating humanity.

Did you catch that Paul said creation is waiting for the children of God to be revealed? What does he mean by that because we are the children of God. What he means by that is a liberation in which humanity is renewed and restored, led by the Holy Spirit. Because in Genesis where the story began, God gave humanity the power and the authority to co-rule the world with God. What a mess we've made of it. Creation was subjected to frustration.

So what creation is longing for in Romans 8 is for the children of God, who've been liberated, have experienced that Exodus at the core of who we are, through the very love and cross of Jesus in which we have been remade. Now, we rule with God, but not for our own ends, like Adam, like Pharaoh, like all those of the past, but rather we live from a place of renewal and join God in ruling this world that brings about the flourishing and the shalom. It's a link back to filling the earth, multiplying, and subduing it. So creation was subjected to frustration as it waited for the children of God to be revealed because it recognizes that its liberation is

caught up in our liberation. Its Exodus is leaning into our Exodus. Creation, all of it, is longing for this God who desires Exodus.

Tyler Staton, a pastor up in Portland, says it this way, "Exodus is not about a people who escaped, but about a God who rescues." We need rescuing. We need healing. We need a the restoration of a world that's broken and shattered by the effects of sin. We need a heart that's renewed and restored, that's been clouded with shame and brokenness. We need Exodus. The first Exodus was about getting the people out of Egypt, and the second Exodus was about getting Egypt out of the people. Have you felt those effects?

This leads us back to Bono's tension. "I can't change the world, but I can change the world in me." But then, years later, "I can change the world, but I can't change the world in me." What is the tension you experience? Some of us come to the book of Exodus, and we long for liberation. Some of us come to this book, and there are external circumstances in which we feel the weight, like those people of Israel, where the world is pressing in on us. You need that Exodus from the external circumstances.

Others of you come, and maybe life's going quite well, but yet you arrive, and you feel hollow. You feel like the people of Israel who would wander the desert, in which they look, and think that the manna doesn't seem to be coming, the daily provision from God doesn't seem to be there. Wouldn't it be better if we were back in Egypt? Some of you experienced where the slavery that you once felt to sin and to brokenness and to shame, and you feel that seemed easier than doing the hard work of allowing God to work in the depths of who we are.

Some of you desire to go back to Egypt. I just want another drink to take the edge off. Just another hit. I don't want to deal with that wound that's so deep and hard. Maybe I should just go back to Egypt. But there's no freedom there. That's where slavery is. Exodus is about looking at all of creation, looking at all of your life, the external, the internal. It's about every corner of creation saying we are caught in this cycle of sin and brokenness. The sin that began in Genesis 3 and what is sin but just brokenness.

It's choosing to think that we know what is right versus wrong in the world as opposed to God, and the devastating effect that we see from Genesis 3 through Revelation 19 is that this brokenness is unleashing havoc and chaos into the world. We feel its effects, but yet we somehow feel connected to it like we want it. Exodus is the story that we'll experience. The invitation is to enter into a journey of formation in which you allow God to free you and liberate you from that external because that liberation comes in a moment. It comes when Moses marches to Pharaoh and says, "Let my people go."

There's a moment in which they were liberated. They crossed through the Red Sea. They get to the other side, and they're free. But what they find on the other side of that freedom is they're

still enslaved. And it would take the rest of their life to work on that other enslavement. To learn, slowly from God, what it means to be human. This is the work of discipleship in which we begin to enter in and say, God, I am wounded. I am broken. And I exist from those places.

A while back, I shared from the stage about how the past year has been hard for my family, and we're in a good season now. We're past the initial trauma of it all. And I appreciate the prayers that so many of you have given, but we experienced a pain. We experienced something from that external world that pushed in on us, and it hurt and stung. The prayers often were like that, "Lord, liberate me. I need freedom. Get me out from under this pain." And God did that. There were moments that he broke through and offered protection. He offered refuge. He offered these spaces.

What I found on the other side of those moments is that something scarred much deeper. That the pain I had experienced had internalized itself within me. And so I went on a journey with the Lord for the past year that I'm still very much on. Working out, how do I not live from that place of shame, of hurt, of pain? It buries itself in deep corners of our hearts. It's the trauma, the hurt, that we all carry with us that ingrains itself within us. And if we don't deal with that, it comes to control us.

What you see is an experience, not of full freedom, but maybe it's a little bit like wandering the desert for 40 years. The invitation of Exodus is to not just be liberated and take your hands off the wheel. It's to enter into a wandering in a desert and to take on this teaching of Jesus to say, "Lord, would we work together on the Exodus of my own soul and my own heart? Would you work in those deep places of my soul?"

The question before us is, what do you need liberation from? What is it that you need an Exodus from? As we stand on the beginning of a long trek, a journey with the people of God, where do you need to experience that liberation? Because this Book of Exodus is about their past, and we'll learn a lot about their past, but it's about our future. It's about where we're going, who we're becoming, who we are as the people of God. Are we leaning more into those old creation dynamics in which we seem caught up in the way of this world, and we just mirror and perpetuate all of that? That tends to lead towards more enslavement.

Or are we willing to enter into the grace of God, but the grace of God doesn't mean you're passive. The grace of God means you are partnering with God and allowing his healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation to bury itself into your core in such a way where you become new.

That's what the story's about. It's about our future. It's about all of creation. Creation itself was subjected to frustration and it groaned for God to move again. Juergen Moltmann, a German theologian, says this, "The Exodus God is the God of liberation

who goes ahead of his people, leading them in faithfulness to freedom."

It was the people of God who followed him and marched out of Egypt. It was God's initiating, rescuing work in which it all began. But it was when they got outside of Egypt that they began to consent to the movement of God in their life and say, "God, will you teach us now what it means to be human again?"

What if you are in that space where you are wounded and broken, and what if you've been resisting? "God, wouldn't it be better if we went back to Egypt?" What if God wants to do a work of liberation, a deeper work? I promise you, if you know the story, it won't be easy. The story of Exodus is one of pain, difficulty, wandering in the desert, unknown, and battle. All of that is a part of the story, but it's a story that leads to freedom.

It's a story of God hearing the cries of his people and saying, "You are my people." The rest of the story is about Israel trying to figure out how to live from that place. It isn't their adherence to the law that made them accepted by God. No, God moved first, and Israel then had to reorganize everything about their life to say that is the reality of who we are, and that's going to require me to reorient everything about me.

Church, what do you need liberation from? What is the pain and the hurt in which you are longing for Exodus? Our prayer, as we begin this series, is that you, too, would hear that response of God in which he meets the people where they are, and little bit by a little bit, he leads them out of their slavery over and over and over again. That's the invitation. The Bono tension was right, he can't change the world, nor can he change the world inside himself. But we don't do that work on our own. We get to walk with Jesus as he changes the world, and he changes the world inside of us if we journey with him.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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