

Lenten Devotional 2020

Thursday, February 27, 2020
Day 2, Exodus 2

Resident Aliens

“Later she gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, for he explained, ‘I have been a foreigner in a foreign land.’” (Exodus 2:22)

I think it would almost be impossible for us to understand the life Moses experienced. He’s born, he’s beautiful, but at 3 months he has to be abandoned (cast into the Nile as the royal directive commanded). But, then, against all hope Pharaoh’s own daughter finds him and claims him. Then Moses’s own mother is hired to nurse and raise him, which she does. Finally, he comes to Pharaoh’s daughter as a son to be raised as a prince of Egypt. In the above quote Moses names his son Gershom to reflect his experience of being a foreigner in a foreign land. I suspect that has been Moses’s experience for his entire life. Moses is an alien everywhere he goes.

In Egypt he’s considered a Hebrew (v. 11), but in Midian he’s considered an Egyptian (v. 19). Moses does not belong, it seems, in any place. So he says: this is who I am; a foreigner. Perhaps that is why he encounters the world around him in such a hostile way. He kills an Egyptian who is beating a Hebrew, he confronts a Hebrew beating another Hebrew, and he stands up to the shepherds in Midian. Is this all Moses trying to wrestle himself into a world that he can belong to?

We, the church, are in the same boat as Moses. The apostle Peter says to his churches, “Since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially, live out your time as *foreigners* here in reverent fear” (1 Peter 1:17). So we are foreigners like Moses; a part of our communities, but never quite fitting in. And, like Moses, we can become frustrated with those communities. We might want to use violence to make a place for ourselves in their midst.

Of course, that won’t work. No amount of violence will make the world accept us. Nor will violence make the world become God’s kingdom. Instead, our text points us to a different way in the world. The way of the cross. The way of patient—even painful—waiting for God to act; to deliver. Notice that it is after Moses gets the violence out of his system—after he’s settled down—that God hears the cry of Israel and remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I love the last sentence, “God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.”

God has a mission for his world. We do not need to fearfully or fretfully try to make something happen because God is inattentive, inactive, or asleep. This doesn’t mean we do not act at all. Rather, we wait on the Lord to direct our steps. Like Jesus (and Moses) this may mean a time of rejection—a casting away—before redemption comes. But, make no mistake redemption is coming and God’s people have a crucial role to play in it. This is key as the church seeks to engage in the social issues of our day. We must walk between the ditches of zealotry and inaction. We must walk the way of the cross, seeking for God’s direction. All of this is predicated on us being foreigners; that allows us to avoid zealotry and see the need for redemption.

Prayer

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob we pray that you would look on our world and take notice of it. There is so much that needs your redemption and we deeply desire to play a part. Help us to wait, to not take matters into our own hand, but to wait for your direction. Join our cries to the cries of the poor, oppressed, and weak so that you will hear and respond. Amen.