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God Makes All Things New

By Rajie Muthukumar

Bible Readings

- **Exodus 12:1-14:** The Passover: God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt marking a new beginning
- **Matthew 18:15-20:** Reconciliation in community: resolving conflict and the promise of God presence when believers gather

Sermon

Looking around us, we see and remember the harvest we celebrated last week and the gifts. All good gifts came from God. And it is beautiful to see what's there.

Today we have heard the story of how God heard the cry of the people who were in Egypt who were struggling. They were slaves in Egypt under Pharaoh. He was very hard on them. He was making them work very hard, break stones and carry stones and make buildings without any rest. God heard their cry and he felt compassion on them and he used Moses to deliver them from Egypt, to free them from Egypt.

We know that there were ten plagues that came upon the Egyptians. But Pharaoh's heart was so hardened that he refused. Every time the plague was given, he thought he was going to let them go. But of course, they didn't.

God for the final time prepared the Israelites. He said the month is here. It is a new month, a new start. And he gave very strict instructions as to what needs to be done. Passover means passing over the houses of the Israelites during the tenth plague which is the death of the firstborn in Egypt.

Today we might have come here with heavy hearts, with anxieties, worried about the future. Some may have been applying for jobs and not got anything anywhere. Some difficult relationships, some waiting for a hospital appointment, even for a surgery. You have waited for a long time and so many issues like that. But the two passages we heard today teaches us two very important messages for our life journey.

Firstly, the Passover. It's a new beginning. It's a new start. In Exodus, we heard that this month you are going to see something new. It is a new beginning. It is the start of your freedom. It is the same message we are hearing for us as well today. It is a new start. If you have been waiting for something for a very long time, it is here for you. It is a new start.

If you have been hurting about something, the uncertainty had taken over. But don't worry, God, the way he told the Israelites through Moses, he is telling us now, it is going to be a new beginning. It's going to be a new start. I am going to give you a new start. Because God had heard your prayers, your cry, your request, your anxiety. He is saying don't worry, it is a new start for you.

Even the passage in the Matthew passage that we heard about the brothers, it says go and sort it out. Don't have that grudge. Don't feel that you can't talk to him again or you have a problem. You can go and start again. You can say sorry and start again.

Sometimes we have tried to avoid confrontations. We may have had some misunderstanding with some people but we don't want to face it. We don't want to tackle it. We want to avoid it. But here it is the time. It is this time. It's a new month, new start. So God is saying start a new start, a fresh. That is what the Passover is telling us about. God is saying it's time to forget the past and move on. And don't have negative thoughts.

Forget the former things and do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing new things. So God gives us new beginnings. So the Passover reminds us of a new beginning.

Secondly, God gives us a new identity. Identity is very important for us. I like to say who I am. I am so and so and I am a daughter of some who. Sometimes you find that wherever you go now, whether you go to the bank or you want to withdraw some extra money or whatever, they are asking for identity. Wherever you go, they do ask for it.

A new identity has been given to the Israelites through Passover. God says, 'You don't belong to Pharaoh anymore. You belong to me.' And that is when he said, 'If you are willing to come out, do what I say, you belong to me. I will lead you to the promised land, which is a fertile land, and I have got something very special for you.' So the Passover has changed it. You are the children of Yahweh. You are the children of God.

And that is the new identity for the Israelites and for us as we love God, love Christ, we have got a new identity. Christ died for us and he has given us a new identity because he has taken away all our sins. He died on the cross. He suffered for us and he has given us a brand new spiritual identity, transforming us into a new creation where our old sins have been forgotten and wiped out.

By his stripes we are healed. God says you don't belong to anyone. You don't belong to the darkness. You belong to the living God. That is why when we read the promise, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' We feel we are very special because that promise is given to us.

This was a promise that God gave the Israelites through Moses. I will not leave you. Whatever happens to you, I will walk the way through you with you throughout all the time. God says you are never alone. I will never abandon you or desert you during any hard times.

You might think that the hard times that we have had that no one cares, no one wants to listen, no one is listening. But God has listened. He is listening to you. He is there because he

has said I will never leave you. You, because you are his child. That identity we need to hold on to, which is very unique for us, because we believe in that Christ who died for us.

Now we have an identity because who we are, we are Christ's children, the children of the living God. This reminds me as I was travelling recently. I come back one day at the airport. There were a family walking in front of us: there was a mother, father, a girl of maybe twelve, and then a little boy, can't be more than three. He had a little tiny backpack on him and he was pulling a trolley. He could sit on it or he would pull it and he was pulling and going. The others were quite a little further away.

The parents, I think, were trying to get to the gates so they were walking a bit faster. The daughter was going with them and he, the little boy, was struggling and he tripped and fell on the little pulley bag and he couldn't get up nor lift the bag up or pull. The father heard the cry and he turned and had a look and he came running and what did he do? He carried his son who had a backpack that was also a little way and he carried the other bag and he was walking.

I was thinking to myself, this is what God does for us. When we think we can do everything on our own, we are very special. I've got this. I can manage all by myself. No. Even if you are carrying the weight, the problems, all that, and if you whenever you are fall, whenever you fall, he can hear you. Your father can hear you and he comes running to carry you, carry your luggage, carry your baggage as well with you.

And thirdly, God says, 'You belong to a new community.' When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, he brought them out as a community of believers. It is not just choosing one or two people to come out with Moses. All of those Israelites came out with Moses together.

And the gospel passage that we heard read also says if you cannot sort it out yourself, your dispute, gather a few people. Even that doesn't work, even the church family, they can get together and support you and get the dispute sorted. So really it's not just us alone, not one person. We need to have a few others with us. That is the new community.

If we love Christ, we love one another and that is the new community that we tend to have. When Jesus died on the cross, he looked down at Mary and said to John, 'This is your mother' by giving him a group of people to look after and he supported his mother by saying, 'This is your son.' A new family, a new start, a new community.

From that Jesus's crucifixion, from that time onwards, there was a new community that was started. We are that community if we are sitting here together. We are that new community. It's a new start, new beginning, new identity and new community.

That is why we have fellowships. We pray for one another, whether it is together we sit and pray or whether we do it on Zoom, when we have meetings, we pray together. And again, it said that's the call to worship. It said if two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there, I am amongst them.

The unity, the community, is what we need. The gospel of John tells us about the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Our God is so gracious. He is a forgiving God and he sent his only son to die for us and we are his children. He has forgiven us and he is calling us into his family.

The Passover resembles Jesus's death. The blood that was shed, but what was put on the two doorposts resembles the blood that Jesus shed for ourselves that he died to take away our sins and that is the freedom that the Israelites have and that's the freedom that we have because Jesus shed his blood.

So we are not living in the darkness anymore. We belong to the light because Jesus is the light of the world. And we are that new community who lives in the light. And that is the unity that we have. All of us together, everyone included.

And Paul reminds the Ephesians and us by saying, 'You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens of God's people.' This is what the Passover tells us. Everyone is unique in the sight of God. Passover is a new beginning for the Israelites. We who love the Lord and ready to follow him, we also have the new beginning.

So remember the time is here for a new beginning and we have a new identity and we belong to a new community. May God allow us all of us to embrace that he makes all things new.