

Numbers 9:1-14

Remembering your rescue keeps you going in the wilderness.

Auto shop waiting - We have had quite the experience with our van. Taking a long time to fix something relatively minor that became major because the dealership delayed for so long.

As the issue popped up again - we quickly scheduled an appointment. And made clear why the van would be there. Of course their process doesn't match my desire. Part of my task felt like reminding them why the van was there. I wasn't just leaving it for weeks on end without a reason or goal. There was purpose in it. (Wish I could say they remembered and made the repair).

Israel in the wilderness had much the same situation. The tribes of Israel, a huge community of people, traveling in the wilderness. Prone to ask "why are we here?" Always called to remember what they were brought out of as motivation for what was ahead, what is yet to come. Their reason for being there.

Our own stories are not far off from this. Wilderness uncertainty. "Is this where we are supposed to be?!" Is there something to settle us, to prove the promise for us?

In our text we have the institution of the Passover, and I think this story in the wilderness gives us clarity on our own calls to remember.

Israel's Rescue

Long before this encounter in the wilderness there was another who stood under the stars and wondered what God had in store for him. Abraham receives a promise that his offspring would number like the stars and they would be a blessing to every nation.

But from that night sky promise, the people of the promise experienced major disruptions and eventually, found themselves as slaves in a place that was originally a place of refuge for them.

Israel had grown so large the Pharaohs of Egypt enslaved them to build their cities. But God heard their cries and called Moses and promised to rescue his people.

Plagues on Egypt, and among them, was the death of the firstborn. Israel was told that each family must take a spotless lamb and kill it, wiping its blood on the doorposts of the house so the angel of death would pass over their home. Egypt, not covered by this blood of the lamb, experienced the death.

And this breaks the dam of oppression and by God's intervention, Israel leaves Egypt crossing over the waters of freedom into the wilderness.

No longer slaves. Live relying on Yahweh for provision, guidance, and the promise of a place, a land to be theirs.

Along the way worship is established to keep them going. Sacrifice in the tabernacle marking God's holiness and Israel being "set apart" for him. The Lampstand shines light as a reminder of God's presence with Israel. And this meal is established to remind them of their rescue.

Passover. Becomes the vital festival for Israel, still today for faithful Jews. Here the Lord institutes the Passover to mark Israel's redemption. Central to their experience with God. So much so that if you didn't keep the Passover you were out.

First month, the second year, since coming out of Egypt.

Numbers 9:2-3 "Let the people of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. [3] On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time; according to all its statutes and all its rules you shall keep it."
(ESV)

Wilderness journey would add to the meal, meat, bitter herbs, the questions from the children of "why to we eat this meal?"

The whole camp, all of God's people are to remember. Every year. Steadily keep their rescue before them.

Keeping the Passover before setting out from Sinai serves to situate afresh the wilderness march within the gracious context of the exodus deliverance out of Egypt, which this meal commemorates.

But this account also shows us the grace of God in remembering.

Numbers 9:6–7 “And there were certain men who were unclean through touching a dead body, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day, and they came before Moses and Aaron on that day. [7] And those men said to him, “We are unclean through touching a dead body. Why are we kept from bringing the LORD’s offering at its appointed time among the people of Israel?” (ESV)

Where ritual cleanliness is essential in worship, but worship is also mandatory to be in the camp - how are they to partake?

Moses, like a good leader, waits to hear from the Lord. And he allows those unclean or traveling (away from home) to celebrate the Passover a month later. Vital that they remember their rescue.

Like postponing the Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner until the whole family can be in town.

“God is not just the God of rules and regulations, but the God who extends grace and mercy into the messy world of reality.” ID

To remember what they have been brought out of. And graciously applied so even the unclean could mark their rescue.

The meals is also extend to sojourners, traveling with Israel - knowing Yahweh is the one true God. Rumblings of blessing promised to Abraham.

One statute, both for the sojourner and the native. All remembering the rescue. Pointing forward to our rescue.

“God’s gracious inclusion of aliens and strangers into his people covers most of us. Hardly any of us are by birth children of Abraham. Yet God in his mercy and grace has reached out more widely than simply to Israel with the gospel. He has

brought those who were once far from him into his kingdom as his sons and daughters.” ID

Essential. Passover had to be kept. They need the basis for this journey.

Passover is the proof of the promise. Israel can trust God because he already redeemed them - he already brought them out of slavery.

But there is significant danger in forgetting - worse in rejecting redemption.

Numbers 9:13 “But if anyone who is clean and is not on a journey fails to keep the Passover, that person shall be cut off from his people because he did not bring the LORD’s offering at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin.” (ESV)

“failure to celebrate the Passover when one is able to do so is a serious sin, meriting being cut off (9:13). “Cut off” probably means dying suddenly and mysteriously as a divine punishment, though some interpreters think it sometimes may refer to excommunication from Israel or judicial execution.”

Refusing to eat the Passover was equal to denying what it celebrated.

Seder Dinner story: Secular Jewish friends, the Father ran the story-telling of the meal but was keen to make sure I understood that it was all made up. Drinking game among Rabbis...

Israel will struggle. The world - wherever you find yourself, will try to convince you either that you are home (this is all there is) or that there is something better than God’s plan. Israel will fall into that trap... some will long for slavery again.

Remembering their rescue - the grace of God to free them from slavery - is what was meant to keep them going on this journey.

And remember our rescue works in the same way...

Our Rescue

Blessing has come to all nations/people. Redemption not from Egypt but from the bondage of sin.

Ephesians 2:1–8 “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—[3] among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. [4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—[6] and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,” (ESV)

Once slaves to sin, brought out by the grace of Christ.

Glorious news of Jesus who took our place and gave us his.

“Just as even Israel stood exposed to God’s wrath in that 10th plague for their idolatry, so we all stand exposed to God’s righteous wrath for our idolatry. All of us have sinned and fallen short of his glory. And apart from some provision, every last one of us was going to perish eternally under God’s wrath in the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. Because God is holy and just...

But in his infinite love, God devised a way to be just and merciful at the same time. Salvation through substitution. The Passover was meant to paint a picture of that, but it wasn’t the real thing. But when we get to the Gospels, the true substitute is here. In the words of John the Baptist, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).” Justin Dillehay

Jesus, having lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father, to the law, gives himself as the sacrifice, as the way of redemption. And he makes it clear, he is the only way to the Father. There is no other blood, no other thought, no other scheme to restore you to your Creator, to give you righteousness needed for eternity, for identity now, thriving now. Only Jesus.

“Paul calls Jesus Christ “our Passover lamb” (1 Corinthians 5:7). For Jesus Christ is the reality to which that Passover lamb pointed year after year. The Passover lamb testified to a salvation that came by grace through simple faith to sinners. It

pointed them to God's commitment to save a people for himself by the perfection of a substitute, someone who would fulfill all of God's rules and regulations in their place, enabling God to extend his grace and mercy to them. It spoke of a cosmic second chance for unclean humanity — that even though in our first parent, Adam, we all sinned and therefore deserve God's rejection and his wrath, in Christ we receive his mercy and his blessing. All we have to do to receive forgiveness is place our faith in Christ." ID

It is the proof of the promise of what is to come - eternity with him, being transformed into his likeness. Laying down the weights of sin and distraction that attempt to keep us from Jesus.

1 Corinthians 5:7–8 “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. [8] Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (ESV)

This is why Paul would say that he knew nothing among the churches but Christ and him crucified. That redeeming work is meant to motivate, comfort, challenge us.

Yes, it unleashed vast implications for all of life, but we don't cut out the reminder in the pursuit of those things.

Once I had a friend visit Reservoir and I will never forget our interaction after the service. In reference to the sermon he said, “The ole' gospel, good to hear it once in a while!”

We have nothing if we don't have this redemption.

We need the reminder all the more in the wilderness. Where we face temptation to assume it - which becomes forgetting it - which becomes rejecting it.

“I am my own savior..” “Sin is a social construct...” “This world is all there is...”

The kind of holiness God desires cannot be produced apart from the gospel. When the sinful patterns “of this world” (v. 10) surround us and tempt us to compromise, the proper response is to return to the unchanging grace of God,

who made his saving mercies known in the Passover, and ultimately in Christ—acting as our Passover Lamb (v. 7). Christ was “sacrificed” in the past: “let us therefore celebrate the festival” (honoring Christ just as the Passover honored God) in the present by lives of sincere devotion and truth (v. 8).

We have been given a meal to remember as well. Isn't this awesome... Jesus in his kindness invites us to a meal to remember what he has done for us!

Refusing to eat the Passover was equal to denying what it celebrated: the Lord's salvation and deliverance. Jesus instituted communion as the new covenant meal celebrating his salvation.

Mark 14:22–25 “And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” [23] And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. [24] And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. [25] Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” (ESV)

Our salvation comes through his substitution. That's why God can say to us, “When I see his blood, I will pass over you.”

1 Corinthians 11:26 “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” (ESV)

Proclaiming redemption all the way home. This is why we do it every time we gather. To be reminded.

A redemption open to all who will believe. God is still gracious.

“From this I gather, learning a lesson from the type, that whatever may be the experiences through which we come to salvation, Christ is always the same, and we must partake of him in the same way. We who have been so defiled that we have, as it were, to eat of the second Passover, even at the eleventh hour, long after others have been feeding on Christ, still there is the same Christ for us as there is for those who come at the right time—who seek the Lord early and find him while yet the dew of their youth is on them.” Spurgeon

Commit to remembering. To own this rescue for yourself. It is what we need to make it through. To hear that he has already run the race for us. That we can press on looking to him with great joy.

2 Peter 1:10–13 “Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. [11] For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[12] Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. [13] I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder,” (ESV)

Always start here - remember your rescue.

See what Jesus will do!

Remembering your rescue keeps you going in the wilderness.

Be rescued: Surrender, repent of your disregard or rejection of Jesus. Believe in him. That he graciously gave of himself for you. To make you right before your Creator. That he has put a claim over your life for his glory and your good.

Be reminded: Journey onward. Claimed by Jesus, rejoice he has rescued you so that you could tell others of his redeeming grace.

When the wilderness is wide, and the journey seems long, remember your rescue. Keep going. Keep trusting. Keep longing for more of your rescuer.