

# "Moses' Legacy: Passover & Crossover"

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First Presbyterian Church of Kingwood

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## EX 12:1-7, 12-13

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, <sup>2</sup> "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. <sup>3</sup> Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. <sup>4</sup> If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. <sup>5</sup> The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. <sup>6</sup> Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. <sup>7</sup> Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

<sup>12</sup> "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup> The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

## Luke 24: 13-18, 25-32

<sup>13</sup> Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>[a]</sup> from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup> As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup> but they were kept from recognizing him.

<sup>17</sup> He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup> One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

<sup>25</sup> He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

<sup>28</sup> As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup> But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

<sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

I have told some of you before about how I heard an old preacher give a sermon, and when he was done speaking, he said, “I don’t know about you, but I needed to hear that.” I liked that, it is true, preachers need to hear their own sermons, and I want you to know, I am listening to this one along with you.

A little lesson in Hebrew this morning. I want to introduce you to a word I learned. It is the word rekar, l’ hee zah hair (the “h” is guttural) lee zachhar and it means remember. Not just to recall, but to recall fondly and with understanding and gratitude. This word is the motto for the Holocaust Museums, a word that defines for them what their history means to them, Remember. For the Jews, remembering is not just a history lesson, but a reminder of God’s movement in their lives, his gracious protection and blessing.

We heard this morning the story of Passover, how God protected and provided for the safety of his people in Egypt. Their world was crumbling around them, they were in great danger and turmoil, it looked bleak for God’s people, but God protected, he carried them, his judgment passed over them. They were spared pain and death. And then he asked them to recall the Passover. Later he commanded that they mark the date, tell their children, remember, remember.

The story did not end at Passover, their lives went on, they wandered in the desert. They came to the Red Sea, and they had to make a decision. Do we trust God and his promises, and forge ahead? Do we decide to choose life, or do we choose weakness and mistrust, and choose slavery and death? And only a few days after the Passover had delivered them from death, some forgot, some didn’t recall with gratitude, how they had been saved. They longed for slavery they knew instead of freedom they had been promised. How soon they forgot, how quickly they lost their trust. But there came a time when they had to make a decision, go forward trusting, remembering, or stopping short, and live smaller lives. It was time to Crossover to the other side of the Red seas. Moses reminded them; remember where you have come from, what has been done for you – that same God is with you still. A few verses later in Exodus Moses spoke to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. <sup>14</sup> The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Be still. Be still, remain calm, don’t panic, remember, remember. The Jews did crossover that day, and saw God’s hand on them again. And then, 40 years later, they would remember their crossover when faced with new challenges in fulfilling God’s promises to them. A whole generation later, they were faced with another Crossover, the Crossover into the Promised Land, and they would have to remind themselves again of their history of God’s providence, his protection, his care for them. The miracle of a successful Crossover gave them

strength and conviction to go even further. They would retell the story to bolster their confidence, bolster it with recalling the Crossover success to give them courage for the next hurdle to be faced.

Jesus did a lot of reminding too. When he met the apostles on the road to Emmaus, he knew they needed comfort, he knew they needed to be lifted up. Christ knew they needed to crossover into a new understanding of where to go and what to believe, and how did meet their need? He told them the stories of the scriptures, the story of God's love for them, and how he had carried his people forward thru all recorded history. Being reminded of the history of their people, the eyes of the men on the road to Emmaus were opened, their hearts burned inside them with new hope and confidence. Jesus did that a lot -- He reminded everyone he met about God's love, how the history of God's providence looked like -- up close and personal. Jesus knew the story of Moses, he remembered the story, and he honored the memory with celebration of Passover, and shared that history with his apostles 1400 years after it had occurred.

Remembering the Passover, and then having courage to commit to the Crossover. It is part of the legacy of Moses, and we tell the story 3400 years later. We can relate to the Jews, facing a tough Crossover, it is hard to remember, it is hard to recall how God has brought us out by the Passover, and it is hard to make the decision to cross over. We are faced with challenging Crossovers, and we hold onto our fears, our mistrust. Our bad memories make us weak and unsure. But we can also see how the crossover changed lives, altered history for ever, and it is a legacy that we love to tell and remember.

I want to tell you another story of Passover and cross over. Peter Vogel was born in 1883 in Missouri, the son of immigrants who spoke little English. His family settled in poor farm land in the rocky Missouri Ozarks. He knew the bad political and economic situations his father and his in-law had fled in Europe. His situation was far from prosperous, but he had his health, a way to make a decent living, and a houseful of kids, a committed wife Lena, and he knew that, compared to what his father had left behind, he had experienced a Passover. Now Pete would not have called himself a religious man, but he understood gratitude, and he was grateful. He might not have called himself blessed, but it was clear to him that he had it good, compared to what the family had left behind, and compared to some of his less fortunate neighbors.

Now, Pete could have just enjoyed his life, made his living, and been quietly grateful. But he saw something new in the world, a new opportunity, a chance to crossover. Pete's crossover was education. Pete never got more than a 6<sup>th</sup> grade education, but he was a voracious reader and he knew the power of education in improving lives. He could see the difference between living and living abundantly. And he determined to crossover, for his family, his kids, and those who would come after.

In the 1930's, when Pete's 7 kids were growing up, their community had no high school, and only rudimentary elementary education. Pete knew his kids couldn't go to college without an accredited high school diploma. So Pete hatched a plan. He would organize the families to pool their resources, provide a school house, hire teachers, and create a high school for their children. The problem was accreditation; the state had to authorize this project. So Pete travelled to Jeff

city, the Missouri capital, and presented their case to the State Board of Education. Pete said, we will provide the resources and the teachers, if you will provide the accreditation. And the board said yes. And in 1936, the first kids graduated from the high school. Two of the eight graduates were Pete's oldest kids. All the rest graduated as their time came.

Pete had tasted some success in his Crossover, and he was emboldened to go a little farther. Remembering his Crossover, and how life was now more abundant for the kids of his community, he took another step. He retired from the farm, and bought a home in the nearest college town, close to campus. The word went out, if you could scrape together the college tuition money, you could live with Pete and Lena Vogel. A dozen of Pete's kids and neighbor kids lived there and completed college. All of Pete and Lena's kids became educators, from kindergarten teachers to college professors.

There is a reason I know Pete Vogel's story, because I have heard it many times. Pete was my grandfather, and his child in that first graduating class was my mother. She attended college, the first in her family to do so, but not the last. Last month, at the family reunion, a cousin came up to me and asked me if I knew how Pete had started the high school, and help put all those kids thru college, and I said, yes, I knew that story, I have heard it since I was old enough to remember. Pete's story is told most every family reunion, 128 years after he was born. My kids know it, my grandkids will know it.

Tom Edwards talked to us a few weeks ago about heroes. About men and women who live a life that shows forth faith and faithfulness to ideals and truths they have learned. Here's my definition of a hero – one who has acknowledged the Passover, and then made the crossover. That's what sets apart the heroes. Some of those heroes of the faith we are still talking about thousands of years after they live. We still talk about Pete's life, 128 years after he was born. I wonder, what stories will they be telling about me 128 years after I was born? What stories will they be telling about you?

Here is what I suggest to you, every life is a life of Passover and crossover. Everyone in this room is a Moses at the Red Sea and a Pete Vogel at the State Board of Education. Every man and woman can look back and see God's hand on their lives, see how they have been protected, and provided for. We may call it luck or fortune, or coincidence, or we may believe that everything we have is the result of our hard work and that we are self-made people, but honest people will acknowledge their blessings and face the fact that God has indeed had plans for them all along, plans not to harm them but to prosper them. Oh, our lives have not been perfect, or pain free, or free of setbacks and difficulties. The lives of people are lives of wrong turns, and trials, and pain.

But every life has been protected, and cared for by God's own hand. How many times have the destructive plagues of life been averted, and you and I allowed to survive, wiser because we have seen how we have been carried.

The question is, what do we do with this experience, this Passover, this hope we have been gifted with, gifted by our God? Do we get scared, wish for the bad old days, because they are comfortable and non-threatening? Do we hunker down with what we have and cling to it, fearful of stepping out in faith? Do we live in fear of risking the small, limited life we enjoy, or do we see

that there is more to life, there is life abundant. Do we build on our Passover to face the crossover with confidence?

Here is what I promise you, the crossovers are coming. The challenges, the opportunities. God doesn't give Passovers without providing the crossovers. Every day of our lives is lived in between the Passover and the cross over. And he calls us to have the courage and faith of a Moses or a Pete Vogel, to take some chances, to leap a little in our faith. You can live your life in between Passover and crossover, never making the leap, but then what will your children, you grandchildren, tell about you? 128 years after you were born, what are the stories that will be told at the family reunion?

Jim Davis talked over the last two weeks about finishing our lives well, looking back on a life lived abundantly, finishing with satisfaction. He described how Moses sang his song at the end of his life, raising his arms in jubilant success. What will I have to sing about, what will you have to sing about?

One more story, a story of, not just of a person Crossing over, but of people walking beside another who was Crossing over. It's a story of a girl I met in Lima Peru about 8 years ago. Her name is Carmen, and she was a church youth group member at the local church in a shanty town we had visited to provide a medical clinic. She was 14 years old, quiet, painfully shy, soft spoken, but she had a spark in her eyes and a wicked sense of humor. We saw her each year for the next several years, and she was a hard worker, helping with the clinic and getting to know the missionaries. She finished high school, and she was facing a life that most of the kids in her neighborhood faced, get married, have some kids, live a life of poverty and limited opportunities.

But Carmen knew something more. She could see that she had been blessed with a loving family, a supportive church group, a caring pastor. She believed in a God who had great plans for her. She could acknowledge her Passover, and she could see a Crossover. For her, the Crossover was a job, a job that required skills; it was like crossing the Red Sea, a huge leap. No one in her family, no one she ever knew, had done it. But her Passover experiences made her bold, and she confidently wrote to pastors, friends, and missionaries she had met, and asked for help. Help came, with support for college. She needed a Moses to walk beside her, to remind her to remain bold and confident when it might be easy to quit and go back to her old life. It wasn't easy, she rode a bus two hours each way from her village each day, for four years, but she graduated last year with a degree in Pharmacy, and has a job in Lima working at a drug store. It is the best job anyone in her community has ever had, she is a local hero and they are rightly proud of her. After she graduated, she asked some of her supporters, how I can repay you. They told her, look around your neighborhood, and find the kid with the spark in their eyes and a wicked sense of humor, and then help them Crossover. There will be a day, many years from now, at the family reunions, when the story of how Carmen crossed over out of her poor community to boldly claim a more abundant life.

Passover – remembering, acknowledging with gratitude how God has carried and protected you thus far. Crossover – choosing to face challenges and opportunities boldly and confidently. Legacy – having your great grandchildren recite your Crossovers at the family reunion. What will they say about me 128 years after I was born? What will they say about you? That we lived

lives of work and play, and then we were gone? Or will they recount how we met our Crossovers with confidence and courage, and changed our families, our selves, and our world?

I don't know about you, but I needed to hear that.

Please pray with me.

God of Moses, God of Passover, God of Crossover, we thank you for our history, and the legacy of Godly people thru the ages. We thank you for the Crossover opportunities you set before us, and ask that, by your spirit, you propel us boldly into life abundant.