

'God Hear's our Cry'

You may be familiar with the story of the Jews (Gods chosen people) in the book of Exodus;

After they had moved to Egypt with Joseph & his brothers they lived for a long time in relative peace & security but when pharaoh died a new king came along and things deteriorated very quickly for them - it says in:-

Exodus 2:23

"Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, **and they cried out**; and **their cry** for help because of their bondage rose up to God".

& Exodus 3:7

"And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, **and have heard their cry** because of their taskmasters, **for I know their sorrows.** ⁸ So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey."

I want to continue on the subject Edwin talked about last week. Now I wasn't here last week (as you know) to hear what he said so if I repeat anything or go over old ground, forgive me, but I do think this is an important subject to talk about again and it just maybe - be exactly where we are as a church and as individuals at this time.

Edwin said recently that he felt strongly that "God has heard our cry"

I want to pose a question to you this morning: - **what is the cry of your own heart?** Perhaps it is for some healing in your own life, or others, or to see your family come into the kingdom of God, maybe some breakthrough you have been praying for years for. It could be a whole host of things - I don't know your heart's desire.

For me I suppose I recently became more aware of the big **I** in my own life, my own selfishness, how much my thoughts revolve around me and I **have cried out to God for change** in this area.

Paul says "I no longer live but Christ lives in me". Growth is measured in the Christian life by what John the Baptist says in John 3:30 "He must Increase I must decrease"

It's a good test: Look at your own life; are **your** needs, **your** wants still on the throne? Do they still take first place in your life? Or do you want to please Him more and yourself less? Are you growing in humility rather than pride? If that's the case then you're moving in the right direction.

So what is this 'crying out to God'? – like to look at 4 stages from the verses we read?

Firstly you cry out when you're in need – in desperate need in fact!

"And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, **and they cried out**; and **their cry** for help because of their bondage rose up to God".

We should also say that there is a difference between **calling** out to God and **crying** out to Him. Crying is more intense than calling. We can call out to God and should do every day in prayer, but **we cry out to God** in those times when our backs are truly up against the wall. Every parent knows the difference between **a child's call** and **a child's cry**. Crying comes from pain, either external or internal pain but it's quite different to calling.

So what we are talking about here is not a 'run of the mill' calling out, but an "**end of your tether**" **crying out**.

God allows us to get to that place where we are in desperate need. Where there is no one else to cry out to and no other place to go.

Many of us however often 'hover' around that place of need where we pray or call upon God, but it's also entwined with our own self sufficiency, we can get by if God doesn't answer our prayers. It's not really a heartfelt cry, & we don't really know what it is to be fully dependant on God. To need Him at that level (include myself in that category)

And there are so many comfort blankets around us that keep us getting to that place of desperate need. But they don't do us any good really because there is only one place of true rest, of true peace and that's seeing our need met & satisfied by total dependence on God.

You see for the Jews (God's chosen people) in Egypt for a time they were ok, they mixed in with the Egyptian society, life was good, they had all they needed, they had respect, freedom, but when a new king came along he forgot their past and he turned the screw on them, in stages, until it

became full persecution, until they ended up in cruel slavery. It was then and only then they cried out.

I honestly believe life's circumstances are meant to make us cry out to God. Make us see we can't cope on our own.

I cried out to God nearly 40 years ago now. In the midst of depression hopelessness, illness and He rescued me; put my feet on a rock.

When we had those young people here 2 years ago we left them with the message; if you get into difficulty, drugs, drink, homelessness, prison, whatever, there is a God in heaven you can cry out to and He will hear your cry your prayer.

So firstly we have to get to that place of desperation where we cry out to God.

Secondly 'God heard their cry'; He hears your cry, our cry.

And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt, **and have heard their cry** "

He's heard it, He hears every prayer, but he takes special note of someone's cry

He's there all the time, like the penguin Edwin mentioned last week – even with all the other baby penguins around the mother penguin heard the cry of her own.

*But in my distress I cried out to the Lord; yes, I prayed to my God for help. **He heard me from His sanctuary; my cry to Him reached His ears.*** (Psalm 18:6)

But it goes beyond that! **Thirdly** God doesn't just **hear our cry** He experiences the sufferings behind the cry as well. A little bit later on in our verses it says:-

And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, **for I know their sorrows.**" - '**For I know their sorrows**'

The Hebrew word used here (**yada'** means "**to know**" – 'to know their sorrows/ sufferings') but it indicates something much deeper than just awareness or **hearing** of their cry, it actually indicates that God is participating in - and experiencing their sorrows. This word **Know** here is

an intimate thing it's the same word used in Genesis 4 about the relationship between a man and his wife.

Now Isn't that an incredible thought - a God that doesn't just observe **our cries** and stands aloof from them - but a God who makes a divine choice to enter **into** and experience his peoples trauma & suffering when they cry out to Him.

How similar it is to the example of Jesus in the NT - God becoming man, it says in our verse "I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" and Jesus (God) came down, flesh incarnate - entering into our suffering, sympathising with our weakness.

Let's just hold that truth for a minute; **God knows** the **cry of your heart** He isn't aloof, distant, unattached. He wants to enter into your suffering with you.

Fourthly, it's not much good just hearing our cry even empathising with them - He does something about it.

Verse 8 "So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians **and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey"**

Psalms 34:17 "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears; **He delivers them from all their troubles"**

He answers our cry and has the best good intentions for us to deliver us out of them.

But here the caveat! firstly He allows us to get to that place where we cry out to Him, that place of desperation, He **hears** our cry, He **knows** our sorrows, He wants to take us into the 'land of milk and honey' free us, heal us, deliver us... But God will do it **in His time & His way!**

He may set us on a path we may not expect! And that's what happened in our story.

Firstly the path God took His people down was **not their expected one** (Exodus 13:17-18) states:-

"When Pharaoh Let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the Philistines, although it was nearer; for God said, 'The people may have a change of heart when they see war, and return to Egypt.' So God led the people roundabout, by way of the wilderness at the Sea of Reeds"

There were 2 paths they could have taken to the promised land, one, the way of the Philistines, the coastal route, the direct route, the nearest point from A to B a distance of about 200 miles and it could have been accomplished in about a fortnight.

The 2nd way was the long route, the way of the wilderness and it turned out they travelled this journey, this route for 40 years!

But is the shortest route always the best route?

God didn't think so! He thought they may turn back at the first sign of opposition, it was the longer more arduous path they took but through it they would learn character, a measure of self-confidence, and a firm reliance upon God.

Put yourself in their shoes, there they were, they cried out to God for help, they had just come out of slavery & cruel bondage under Pharaoh, but they ended up in the desert without even the basic of necessities (water), they could of least expected to sit back and enjoy their freedom for a time maybe even enjoy a time of blessing?

God took them into the wilderness – it must have felt they had come out of the cooking pan into the fire! - **It was not the path they expected.**

The disciples couldn't understand the path Jesus took either, they believed He was their Messiah the one who had come to rescue them from Roman oppression, they had his course into Jerusalem already mapped out! A victorious all conquering king - **but that's not the pathway He chose.**

Matthew 16:21

"Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you"

Peter must have thought - like Israel the Jews in the desert - this can't be right! - **This is not our expected path.**

So when God answers your prayer, **hears your cry**, it may not necessarily be in the way you think!!

If you're looking for healing it maybe you're not healed but you receive more of his grace to endure, maybe He is teaching you patience?

Maybe if we are looking for more people to come in to our church or a movement of God in our area. God is saying be faithful with who you have.

I don't know! All I'm saying is it may not be the answer you think.

Just this week I was thinking about my mom, suffering, why don't you take her Lord? But in the midst of all this I had an incredible conversation with my sister. I was thinking one thing, God was doing something else.

There is a teaching today that God will give us everything we want and just in the way we want it! – Like some formula or vending machine, some cooking recipe, you put in the ingredients and the outcome is guaranteed the same every time.

If you give your money away you will be abundantly blessed with more, if you pray for healing it will happen because God wants to heal everyone, but you can't pigeon hole God to work in a certain way.

God often does unexpected things and when he answers **our cry** it may take us into places we would rather not go, sometimes the pieces of the jigsaw do not always fit in the way we would like, but.....

..If you commit your way to Him, God may sometimes take you down a path your weren't expecting, it might not be your first choice or the shortest route or the easiest but it will be the best path for you because He is changing you. And He will be with you along the way.

Conclusion

So what is the cry of your heart? Are you desperate enough for it? if you are God has heard your cry, He not only heard it but he is experiencing what you're feeling, He has entered into that cry with you because He wants to know you better & for you to know Him better.

But He will answer your prayer & get you to the Promised Land. "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:6) **whatever path He takes you down.**

Amen

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