

Title: The Reward of Reproach
Text: Hebrews 11.23-28 (key v.26)
Theme: Bearing reproach with joy
Series: Hebrews #42
Aim: I aim to help my people persevere with joy because of the joy in the reward at the end.
Prop Stmt. The reproach of Christ is greater wealth than the treasure of this world. (How much greater then is the favor of Christ?)

Read Text:

This text reminds me of a roller coaster at Cedar Point. You get in, buckle up and start heading down the track. Initially, the ride is a bit slow, but the anticipation is building as you head for the first gigantic drop. Along the way, there are signs that you are getting closer and closer to that terrifying (or thrilling) fall. There is a rhythmic clicking sound as you get to the first peak, that for a second, stops, and then...BAM! You are flying!!

Right here in this chapter, the text seems to start to pick up a little speed. The sentences and clauses are shorter, and more staccato like. Narration gives way to interpretation. Even the statements about the deaths of Jacob and then Joseph set us up for the birth of Moses. And here, in the hall of fame of the faithful, we see a magnificent display that causes our hearts to sing. This is our heritage of faith. These are the shoulders on which we stand. These are our people. This is our story and this is our calling. We are not mighty and really not that many, but pressing on by faith with joy, as pilgrims is the means that God uses to do incredible things, even if we are nothing more than slaves.

Faith is seen in:

1. **Two little slaves defying the king.** (23)

There are two reasons given in this text for why Moses' parents refused to cooperate with the king's infanticide program. 1) They "saw that the child was beautiful." Now, honestly, doesn't that sound a little arrogant? What parent doesn't think that their child is striking? And yet, the emphasis of this text is on their faith, that seems to be given even more resolve by how good and healthy this child obviously was. I think that there may be something else going on here, providentially. When you look at the Exodus account of this, Moses' parents looked at him and saw that he was good. That sounds like the response that God had to his own creation. And since this is, in a sense the creation of the nation of Israel, I think that the AH here is drawing a bit of a parallel between these two, since his first example of faith (in this chapter) refers to the creation account.

The other reason for their hiding Moses was simply 2) because "they were not afraid of the king's edict." This was an awesome act of faith by Moses' parents. The king is committing murder of the male Hebrews babies. The Hebrews were slaves with no rights, no courts, no army and no means to defend themselves. Here was a young couple who did not think like slaves nor react like slaves but instead defied the king who seemed to

have complete power over them and lived according to a higher calling. Now, in a sense they followed the king's instructions. They put their baby in the Nile, as he commanded. Of course they put him into a basket and then put him into the Nile, but still you could argue like an attorney that they followed the law, though certainly not its intent.

Consider the risk. They could have lost their lives by this God-fearing act of rebellion. They could have lost their two other children. They could have invited the wrath of Pharaoh against them and others in their tribe. They risked a lot. But, they did not fear the king. Now, this is a really good spot to stop and chew on this for a bit. Consider this: The only people who have power over you are the ones that you fear. Beloved, we are to love people, but not fear people. We are to fear God, not man. There are kids at your school who want you to fear them. They try to intimidate you, manipulate you, threaten you in a vain attempt at making themselves feel in charge by getting you to fear them. When you do not fear them, it drives some of them crazy. Some managers and bosses never seem to get this figured out. They think that their position gives them the right to intimidate every one else around them. What a sick and twisted view of authority. There is only One who is worthy of fear and worship. All others who demand it are imposters. And in their heart of hearts they know it, which is why they are so desperate to do anything to hold on to it. When you do not play their game it reveals that they really do not have inherent power. They only have the appearance of power.

A girl I know was working as an administrative assistant. She was told to tell a particular caller that her boss was not in the office when he was standing right there. She politely told him that she could not do that. I can take a message. I can tell him that you will call back, but I cannot lie. Her boss was stunned. He threatened to fire her. She acknowledged that he could, but since she works for his boss, he can rest assured that if she will not lie to others about him, she will not lie to him about others.

Respect the king, but fear God. That is what Moses' parents did and this was an amazing picture of faith. They trusted the God that they could not see, instead of the king that they could see. They had no guarantee that this would "work." They did not have any plan other than to put their son into a basket into the river and wait and see what would happen. There was no step two. They could not control the future. But what they could control they did. So here is this young, poor, and destitute, at the time no-name couple, in slavery who acted in faith. Now, why do you think their story is told here? Is it simply because they were the biological parents of Moses? NO! Look at what they did. They are an amazing example of faith. Their story shows how God marries his Sovereignty to our acts of faith-driven obedience. God is going to do what God has promised that he will do. He already promised Abraham that this nation would be Egypt for 400 years and then God would bring them out. And yes, God did just that. But, even though God will carry out his promises, He chooses to do that through people who exercise faith in him. And here is what is so amazing about this is when you believe God, he uses that as a launch pad.

They refused to obey the sinful edict of the king. They could do that much. Then, God took over. And when I say that God took over, I mean God took over. Now, it wasn't

overnight, but look at what happened here. At the end of Exodus 1, Pharaoh is drowning Hebrew baby boys in the Nile. At the end of Exodus 14, God drowns the entire Egyptian army into the Red Sea. You wanna play that game? I'll play that game! You drown my little boys, I'll drown your big boys. You kill my babies, I'll destroy your army. Don't mess with my kids! In Exodus 2, God rescues out of the water. In Exodus 14, God rescues all of his people through the water and the entire chain of events that destroyed a world empire and gave birth to a nation started with one couple who did not fear the pretend king on a human throne. I am convinced that the AH includes this verse, not only because of the impact that this decision had upon Moses (which I think is so obvious in the next verses), but also because of how encouraging this had to be to the people (the Hebrews) to whom this letter was written. Here they were, living (presumably in Rome) under the tyrannical dictatorship of Nero (or one like him). They are not only under incredible pressure, but some from within their own ranks have defected (10.25). So, not only is the story of Amram and Jochebed, encouraging, but look at how God used the daring faith of these parents in the life of their son.

Faith is seen in...

2. **Identifying with the mistreated People of God** (24-25)

Their plan to put him in the Nile in a basket in defiance of Pharaoh brought about a result that they could never have dreamed. But the result brought on a fresh problem. Moses ended up being adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh and would be raised in the palace with all of the privileges and opportunities that come with being royalty. Of course, he would be taught to despise slaves. After all, his access to privilege and his surroundings of wealth were due, in large part to the work of the slaves. It is easy to despise people. It is natural to look down upon others, since our hearts are so sinful. It is convenient to look down upon others who are providing you with prestige and wealth. Should you ever see them as your equal, then you would face a crisis of conscience regarding how they are being treated. Moses is being raised and educated in the palace. He was now royalty, but his people are slaves. Naturally, we would expect him to reject his people in favor of being part of the ruling class, the nobility.

But, "when he was grown up", Moses made a decision, like his parents that was rooted in faith. He chose mistreatment. In fact, he chose to be identified with the mistreated. He could not be considered the son of Pharaoh's daughter and be part of the people of the mistreated. The people of God and the mistreated go hand in hand.

Exodus 2.11 tells us of the event. The text states that, "one day when Moses had grown up (notice the similar language in Hebrews) he went out *to his people*." Moses had been raised in the palace, but somehow he knew who he was. Did he know then, of the act of faith of his parents that had resulted in his life being spared? Did he consider their faith that made him aware of how a poor, seemingly powerless couple defied the king? Did their act of faith create within him a longing to live for something greater than privilege and wealth? I can only guess that he did, since the text does not state that explicitly. Exodus 2.11 sounds like Moses made a deliberate decision to go "out to his people." And

when he did, he saw that they were being mistreated. A Hebrew was being beaten by an Egyptian, so Moses stepped in to rescue the Hebrew and he killed the Egyptian and buried his body in the sand. He came to his own to rescue them. And in that moment, when Moses decided to intervene, he stepped over a line. He stepped out of the box of being the son of Pharaoh's daughter and into the box of being identified with the people of God. That night he presumably went back home to the palace, that in a way was no longer home because the next day he went out again to see the Hebrews.

Now, here is where the story really gets interesting. Moses, on the second day sees two Hebrew slaves fighting and he attempts to intervene. He had already rescued one from the Egyptian, and was now attempting to rescue them from themselves. At this moment, these guys turned on him. They did not want his help. Their words were cold and filled with venom. You don't belong to us. We don't need your help. What, are you going to kill us like you did the Egyptian? And so, this man who acted in faith, who chose to identify himself with the mistreated discovered that the mistreated did not want him. He came to his own and his own did not receive him. And in that moment, we see in Moses a reflection of Christ who would come and experience that on a personal and national level. Moses and Christ were fine as long as they only tried to rescue their people from their enemies, but when they talked about rescuing people from themselves, it all went south.

Moses acted in faith. It wasn't perfect faith, but it was faith. In that moment, it did not work out. There was no amazing salvation or immediate rescue, like his parents experienced in their act of faith. For Moses, his act of faith looked like a colossal failure and he had to run for his life. From one perspective, Moses had a lot to lose and he lost it all because he identified with the mistreated people of God and now, he has no one. Situations like this really test us and reveal what is the object of our faith. Do you believe God - - period. This took Moses a long time to work through. He thought he was done with Egypt, with his people and with faith, but God was not done with him. He tried faith, it didn't "work".

Beloved, there is no guarantee that your good intentions will result in people's acceptance of you. Will you persevere, when your acts of faith are not received? Will you choose self-pity and anger at God because it did not work? It is easy at this point for us to look back and see how God used all of that in the life of Moses, not only for the eventual rescue of the people of God, but also to point to Christ, but in that moment (that 40-year long moment), it wasn't quite as clear was it? It would be easy for him to become bitter if he focused on all that he had given up for these people. The author of Hebrews acknowledges that Moses gave up the "fleeting pleasures of sin." Sin appears to be fun, but it cannot satisfy. Moses compared the fleeting pleasures of sin with the result of being identified with the people of God and chose the mistreatment! And when he did, he, by faith "considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt."

Points 2 and 3 are parallel points. Identifying with the mistreated people of God is comparable to identifying with the reproach of Christ. That's powerful! That is what Moses did. Faith is seen in...

3. Choosing temporary humiliation for eternal joy. (26)

Do you see how this statement would be of great encouragement to the recipients of this letter? (10.32-34). The author of Hebrews is reminding them that when we identify with the mistreated people of God, we are walking in the steps of Moses, whose life anticipated and in a sense was a prophecy, a picture of the life of Christ. Therefore, when we chose temporary humiliation because we are convinced of the eternal joy that comes as a result of believing God's promises we are walking in the steps of Christ. This is one of the ways in which we are to look like Christ.

Now, I think that this verse is absolutely critical to this text and perhaps this chapter and book. What Moses did, is presented to us as a pattern for how we are to live in this present world. It is like he took a sheet of paper (papyri) and made two columns; one called the cost and reward of being identified with the people of God and the other, the cost and reward of staying with the world. Each column had immediate comparisons and eternal comparisons. The immediate comparisons are real, and they are not easy to deal with, but they cannot compare with the eternal results. When you look to the reward, you will come to the same conclusion. The reproach of Christ is of greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt. And by the way, have you ever seen some of the discoveries and descriptions of the treasures of Egypt?

How can you turn your back on treasure like that? Does God call you to simply turn your back on treasure, deny yourself pleasure, get a fierce, determined, hard-shell, tough-guy attitude and grit it out? Is that what perseverance means? Are we to simply gut our way through this and call on each other to just man-up, quit whining and tough it out? NO! "he was looking to the reward." What is the reward? The reward is being with God and enjoying God forever and ever.

Think of it. Why are treasures and money so attractive? It is not the treasure itself or the money itself that is attractive; it is what the treasure and the money promise. Treasure and money promises to get you love. If you have stuff, people will want to be with you. If you have stuff, people will respect you. If you have stuff, people will be impressed with you. If you have money, you have security. What if you could have a love that is greater than you could ever imagine and that could never be taken away. What if you could be in a relationship with someone who values you and will die for you because he loves you so much? What if you could have ultimate security, knowing that you are in a place where nothing bad will ever happen and where you will never have to fear? If you had all of that, then you could take all the gold in the world and use it for asphalt – couldn't you?

Verse 26 is such a defining verse. It gives us a grid through which we can look at life. It helps us realize that God does not settle for our duty. God is after our delight. God wants our obedience to be driven by faith in the joy that he will provide. God promises us joy. But that joy is found in him. *Persevering faith is driven by comparing the eternal pleasures of God with the fleeting pleasures of this world.* Notice how many words in this text speak to the thinking that you are called to do. Refusing, considering, choosing, and looking all refer to activities of the mind. Beloved, think it through. Look at what this

world promises but cannot deliver. Compare that to the promises of God. When you look at it like that, then you can understand how faith is seen in...

4. **Esteeming the God you cannot see over the king that you can see.** (27)

There were two times that Moses left Egypt. I think that this is referring to the actual Exodus event, since by the time the 10 plagues were done Moses was clearly the guy who was calling the shots and not Pharaoh. God used the plagues, to display his power, to establish Moses as his chosen leader for his people, to dismantle Egypt as a superpower and to expose Pharaoh's lack of power. When it was over, Moses realized that behind all of the pomp and appearances of prestige and authority, this world really has nothing that it can hold over us.

Like his parents, Moses did not fear the king. We could argue that God gave him a few more assurances in the forms of a burning bush and the plagues, but then again God asked of Moses a bit more too. But, this is what I find so encouraging. It is not a promise, but I have seen this pattern. When parents live in fear of God and not in fear of people, they provide a wonderful security blanket for their children.

Many parents are way too concerned that their children dress cool, hang out with the cool crowd, have all of the gadgets and toys and be accepted. That is called "the fear of man" and it is a snare. We need to be loving, respectful, and humble, but we do not really care about the opinions of this world. We do not live for the esteem of the king of popularity, or the king of social acceptability, or the king of talent, or the king of prestige. Teach them to love and esteem the God that we cannot see (yet) over the king that you can see now, but who will be gone tomorrow. Just because all of the girls are showing off way too much in the way they dress, does not mean that you let the king of smut make the rules in your home. Just because all of the boys are smoking this and snorting that, and drinking this, does not mean that you let the king of stupid make the rules in your life. Who cares if it isn't cool to be smart, or to be respectful, or to sit up straight? Who cares if actually learning how to express yourself with descriptive language that did not come from the sewer is unusual? The king of dirt does not rule our lives. The king of filth is not the one we bow to. We esteem the one true God, and do not fear, nor follow the imposters. Parents, teach your children to esteem God. And you cannot teach them to esteem God if you are bowing down to and living in fear of idols of fashion and pop culture.

Faith is seen in ...

5. **Obeying the Word of God when the lives of others depend on it.** (28)

Leadership is not easy. If it were, everyone would do it. There are times when you are called to make a decision that is going to affect lives, and you know it. In our history, presidents have been called upon to decide to go to war, or not. That has to be one of the most stressful decisions any leader could make. It is one thing to make a decision that is going to affect your life, but when you do it and it affects the lives of others, that puts the

pressure on to a different level. When God told Moses what was going to happen on the night of the original Passover, Moses responded by giving careful instruction to the people. He knew that the lives of all of the firstborn sons depended on it. And Moses believed God. The Exodus was the result. And that event launched a series of events (vs. 29-31). He not only did the magnificent and powerful, he did the merciful and unexpected. But this text and particularly the verses that follow speak of how God uses rather lame looking people to do really amazing things. Most of us here are really ordinary. I hate to tell you, but on the talent scale and the power scale and on all the scales that the world uses, we don't make honorable mention. But, we are the people that God loves to use to show that "faith works."