

# A Song for all Seasons

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 31 December 2017

Preacher: Josh Johnston

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, we're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning, and you'll find it in the book of Exodus. Josh is going to be preaching to us from this Song of Moses, or at least one of the songs of Moses, in Exodus chapter 15.

It's page 57, if you have one of the blue church visitors' Bibles. And this is a great song that Moses and the people of Israel sang after the crossing of the Red Sea, the great deliverance from the slavery, the bondage of Egypt, and the Lord's putting away forever of the Egyptian hordes who were following them into the depths of the sea.

And so, in chapter 15, verse 1 of Exodus, we read this. Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously.

The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise him, my Father's God, and I will exalt him.

The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea.

[ 1 : 3 1 ] The floods covered them. They went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.

In the greatness of your majesty, you overthrow your adversaries. You send out your fury. It consumes them like stubble. At the blast of your nostrils, the waters piled up.

The floods stood up in a heap. The deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue. I will overtake. I will divide the spoil. My desire shall have its fill of them.

I draw my sword. My hand shall destroy them. But you blew with your wind. The sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand.

[ 2 : 3 2 ] The earth swallowed them. You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed. You have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

The peoples have heard. They tremble. Pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed. Trembling seizes the leaders of Moab. All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.

Terror and dread fall upon them. Because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone. Till your people, O Lord, pass by.

Till the people pass by whom you have purchased. You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain. The place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode.

The sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. The Lord will reign forever and ever. For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them.

[ 3 : 37 ] But the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea. Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand.

And all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang to them, Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days into the wilderness and found no water. Then they came to Marah.

They couldn't drink the water of Marah because it was bitter. Therefore it was named Marah. And the people grumbled against Moses saying, What shall we drink?

And he cried to the Lord. And the Lord showed him a log. And he threw it into the water. And the water became sweet. There the Lord made for them a statute and a rule.

[ 4 : 40 ] And there he tested them saying, If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God and do that which is right in his eyes and give ear to his commandments and keep his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians.

For I am the Lord your healer. Then they came to Elam where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees.

And they encamped there by the water. Amen. May God bless to us. This is word. Please turn again in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 15.

I'm sure many of us at the end of the year like to look back and think about the things that we've learned.

Maybe you've finally learned how to use some form of modern technology. Maybe it's been learning that your spouse doesn't like it when you fill in the blank.

[ 5 : 51 ] I'm still learning. Maybe it's been learning how to pick yourself up when you've had a stumble. Well, at the end of a long struggle to be freed from slavery, Moses and the Israelites were able to look back at what they had learned of their God and could sing about it.

God had revealed himself clearly to Israel and indeed to the world. All this through the plagues and ultimately the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea.

And so Moses and Miriam's song marks the end of a significant time in Israel's history. It's a song that sums up, that reflects on their escape from slavery and tells us what they learned of their God.

It concludes this section on their escape from Egypt. In the early chapters of Exodus, we're introduced to a bit of a boxing match.

Pharaoh goes several rounds with God and at every turn, he's pummeled. It's not a fair fight. In trying to enslave Israel and stop them growing, they end up having more and more children.

[ 7 : 01 ] When he tries to get the midwives to kill the children, they don't do it. Instead, they say the Israelite mothers are too strong. Pharaoh is powerless when God introduces Moses to be the leader and rescuer of Israel.

So much so that Pharaoh's own daughter pays to bring him up. Whilst this battle raged, Israel groaned in their slavery and their cries went up to God.

He heard them and he moved to keep his covenant promises. And so ultimately, at the end of the battle, the Israelites are able to sing this song that tells us two things.

First, the song shows that they belong to a ferocious God who has triumphed. They belong to a ferocious God who has triumphed. God is not meek and mild.

He is a warrior who will crush those who oppose him and who oppose his people. Verse 1. He has triumphed gloriously.

[ 8 : 08 ] The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. An entire army flung into the abyss as though it were nothing. Through everything that has happened so far in Exodus, Israel have come to know just what their God is like.

This song brings out two of the key themes from chapters 1 to 14. God's rescue and God's revelation. The story of Exodus begins by moving on from Joseph, who brought the descendants of Abraham to Egypt.

Joseph had prospered Egypt by the Lord's hand, all the way to being named the second in command. But Exodus begins by telling us that there's a new king in Egypt now, a king who didn't know Joseph.

And so the Israelites growing in number was a problem to him. His solution was to enslave them to kill their babies. The slavery only caused the number of Israelites to grow because God all along was keeping his covenant promise to make Abraham's descendants into a nation.

God wouldn't ignore the plight of his people. He heard their groaning. He remembered his covenant. He saw his people and he knew. So he sent them a savior in the form of Moses.

[ 9 : 28 ] And God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush. He revealed his name, Yahweh. I am who I am. And so Moses was to have confidence in light of that, to lead his people to freedom, to lead them to rescue because of who God is.

And that question is a key one. Who is the Lord? Pharaoh, when confronted by Moses, asks that very question. Who is the Lord? Why should I let my slaves go?

Who is this person you talk of? And just as God revealed himself to Moses, he would do the same for Israel and Egypt. He sent the plagues. And in the end, Pharaoh and all of Egypt came to see just who God was.

They came to see that he was powerful over all of creation, over everything supernatural. And the battle between God and Pharaoh continued until finally, Pharaoh lets them go.

But he reneges again and gives chase only for his army to be swallowed by the sea as God achieves a full and final victory over Pharaoh. That's the backdrop to this song.

[ 10 : 45 ] Rescue has come to God's people. And in so doing, the world came to know who God was. And so Israel sing of God's victory. Finally, they get who he is.

For the first time, they declare to God, verse 3, the Lord, Yahweh, the name revealed to Moses at the bush. The Lord is his name. We knew Yahweh.

We knew this furious, this ferocious God who is triumphant. We knew who the Lord is. He is a man of war. He is a warrior who fights for his people, a warrior who crushes his enemies.

The song is full of lots of words and phrases about God's might and victory. He comprehensively destroys an entire army at the blast of his nostrils. We would struggle to blow out the candles on a birthday cake.

But God wipes the army of a superpower off the face of the earth. Israel looked at the army of Pharaoh in chapter 13 and they were afraid.

[ 11 : 49 ] They thought they'd be better off back in Egypt. When faced with the terrifying army, they feared the worst. But no army, no chariots or weapons hold any threat to God or his people.

Verse 9, the enemy can say all they want that they will pursue and overtake and divide and destroy God and his people. They can say all they want that they'll foil God's plans.

But God can blow the wind and bury them in the sea. God saw the plight of his people and he acted in might and power to crush his enemies.

It might be easy for us to look around at the might of the world around us. It might be easy to think that what we do here is weak, is insignificant, that preaching and singing and being the church won't really do much against the increasing hostility of the world around us.

Another year is about to pass and the tolerance police seem only to be stronger. The systematic attack on what it is to be human, to be God's image bearers, continues unabated.

[ 13 : 01 ] It's easy to think that we're fighting a losing battle. To look around and be afraid of the world's chariots. To look at the army that assembles against the church.

To hear of the lengths that governments will go to to oppose our gospel partners, like in Delhi. To hear of the daily danger that people like the Gills face in Pakistan. Real, frightening and powerful enemies.

But listen to the song of triumph that our forebearers could sing and hear what we can sing. God has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider he's thrown into the sea.

He has triumphed gloriously. Satan's head is crushed through the cross. The Lord is our strength and song. He has become our salvation. This is our God.

We will praise him. Pharaoh's chariots have been cast into the sea. His chosen officers were sunk. The floods covered them. Christ has washed away our sin.

[ 14 : 07 ] He has disarmed our enemy of any weapon that can damn us. God is a warrior and he will not be trifled with. No matter the opposition, all it takes is verse 6, his right hand, or verse 8, the blast of his nostrils, or verse 10, the blowing of his wind, and his enemies are defeated.

The good news of the kingdom of God, the gospel message, is the news that God's king has been victorious in battle, winning victory with his own, and conquering his enemies.

God is a warrior and he fights for his people. He is ferocious. And in the end, even if it doesn't look like it now, he will be triumphant again.

And so we can sing songs of victory. Israel had come to know God and his might because of the victory they'd witnessed. But we can be more sure of it.

For the rescue of Israel from Egypt was but a shadow of the rescue that Christ won for his people through his cross. This song celebrates the full and final defeat of Pharaoh.

[ 15 : 26 ] But we can sing a song of the full and final defeat of Satan, of death, of all that opposes God and us. We can sing, Thine be the glory, risen, conquering son.

Endless is the victory that our death has won. But Moses' song isn't just about victory past. It doesn't just tell of a ferocious God who's triumphed for Pharaoh.

It's also a song that shows they belong to a faithful God who can be trusted. They belong to a faithful God who can be trusted. God works to keep his covenant with his people.

His might assures us that he will accomplish all that he's promised. He isn't a God who goes around digging people out of holes with his might. No.

He works according to what he's promised. He has told us what he will do and he alone is able to do it. The song doesn't just celebrate the defeat of Pharaoh and his enemies.

[ 16 : 30 ] It celebrates what has been accomplished for the people of God. In bringing Israel out of Egypt, God wasn't just easing their temporal struggles. He was moving to make them his own people.

Long ago, he had promised to Abraham that he would make a great nation of his descendants. He's begun to do that in Exodus. they've multiplied greatly. They've become a great nation.

But God also promised that they would have a place as their own. Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. And he promised to bless them and to be their God.

That is where they're heading. They're heading to meet with God himself. They're heading for the land that is promised. And so Israel sing verse 13.

You have led in your steadfast love, your covenant-keeping love, the people whom you've redeemed. You've guided them by your strength to your holy abode. God isn't just mighty to reduce to nothing those who forsake him, but he is merciful to redeem those who follow him.

[ 17 : 41 ] He established a relationship, a covenant through which he relates to his people. and seeing the plight of his people in Egypt, God determined to act to rescue and redeem them.

And the song recognizes the ongoing commitment of God to keeping his promises. Look again at verse 13. He hasn't just led them out of Egypt.

He's leading them towards himself. Leading them to his holy abode where they can at last be in the presence of God. And even more than that, we see the confidence that they can have in him in verses 14 to 16.

God has revealed his might in war and word has spread. Word has spread to all those who stand in the way of the promised land. Verse 14, the peoples have heard, they tremble.

Pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Verse 15, the chiefs of Edom are dismayed. The leaders of Moab tremble. The inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.

[ 18 : 49 ] Terror and dread fall upon them. Notice the contrast between verse 13 and these verses. For those who belong to God, they enjoy steadfast love and redemption.

They have God's strength to guide them. But for those who oppose God, those who reject his people, those who get in the way of his promises, it is only terror, trembling, and dread for them.

Verse 16, they are petrified at the prospect of God's strength. Israel knew that there was a journey still ahead of them with enemies all along the way.

But because of what they have seen God do, because they have come to see that they follow the Lord who is mighty over all the powers of Egypt, the Lord who controls creation, the Lord who has the wind and the waves and the earth bowing to his will, they can have confidence that what God has promised he will do.

When they come to Canaan and they find hostile powers waiting to oppose them, they can have confidence in the face of that that the Lord is a man of war, that he can stretch out his hand and the earth will swallow them.

[ 20 : 09 ] They can have confidence because they are, verse 16, the people that he's purchased. God will bring to fruition his great gospel promises. He will draw to himself a people as his own.

He will give them a land flowing with milk and honey. Verse 17, God will bring them to his mountain. They will meet with him. God will meet this ferocious, holy, mighty, faithful God will meet these people.

He will be their God. And if that was true for the Israelites, how much more true is it for us? At this point, they've enjoyed a wonderful rescue.

They've seen their enemy defeated, but the journey isn't over. They haven't arrived in the promised land. Trouble and difficulty were still to come, but in witnessing God's revelation of himself, in seeing God defeat Pharaoh, they could have confidence in what was ahead.

For us now, Christ has died and been raised. We knew that sin has already been defeated. We knew that the killer blue has already struck Satan. We've been joined together to Jesus, filled with his spirit, but likewise, the journey isn't over.

[ 21 : 31 ] Look around. We still live in a broken, fallen, fragile world. We are waiting for the final fulfillment of all that God has promised. We live in the age of proclamation, of God's patience, and as a church approaching a new year, we still have work to do.

Our battles won't be to fight against the Canaanites or the Moabites. Our battle is to hold out the word of life to a world that hates God. And that can seem like a daunting task.

The church in Scotland seems only to be shrinking. Maybe some of us can even slip into thinking, what's the point? Will we even make it another year? When looking at the struggles around us and ahead of us, we need reminders of the objective truth of what God has done.

to give us confidence that he can and will do what he's promised. That's where hope comes from. Israel sang this song and they would keep singing this song to remember the truth about God that they learned.

Verse 1, Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to God. Verse 20, Miriam and all the women went out and they sang this song. the writer is emphasizing that all of Israel sang this song and what we sing matters for our songs as a church are directed to God and they show what we knew of him and they remind us what we knew of him.

[ 23 : 11 ] And now we can sing of what has already happened. We can sing that the grace of God has already appeared bringing salvation to all people. we can sing that we're waiting for our blessed hope the appearing again of the glory of our great God and Savior.

We live in between the two appearances of Jesus and because he has been raised as a down payment of our resurrection we can have all confidence that the gospel promises will be ours one day by sight.

The Israelites were looking forward to Canaan but that was only a shadowy partial fulfillment of what God had promised. We look forward to the truer promised land and we know that God has defeated more than just Pharaoh through Jesus the greater Moses Satan has been defeated and will be finally crushed.

So as we approach a new year with lots of work to do across our three locations throughout our various congregations we do so with firm trust that God keeps his promises.

We do so stocked with a hymn book full of reminders of what God has done and so with anticipation of what he has yet to do and we live and fight knowing that we are on the Lord's side and he guarantees that in the end everything will be victorious for us.

[ 24 : 49 ] However, we mustn't be unrealistic and unprepared for accompanying this song and following immediately afterwards we see a forgetful people who are easily troubled.

Verses 22 to 27 we see a forgetful people who are easily troubled. It's something of a pattern in Exodus that what can be seen sets the tone for how Israel respond to God.

Israel's praise quickly turns to protest. Immediately after this song Israel go through a spell of grumbling. Verse 22 they set off into the wilderness of Shur and found no water.

Verse 23 then they do find water but it's bitter. And so in spite of all that they know about God and all that they know about his leader Moses verses verse 24 they grumble.

When they were faced with the sight of Pharaoh's army after they'd already been freed from slavery they said it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.

[ 25 : 57 ] They had witnessed God's miraculous works his display of power over all of creation. They'd been released and more than just released they'd plundered the Egyptians being given all manner of gold and silver and yet when they're faced with the army they say they'd rather be back in Egypt back in slavery and now again after seeing the army defeated miraculously again after they crossed the Red Sea they grumble again.

In this instance God provides what his people need he's gracious despite their grumbling verse 25 he makes the water sweet and even more gracious verse 27 he leads them to 12 springs of water would that stop the grumbling would that strengthen the faith of Israel to look at their lives through the eyes of faith instead of sight well straight into chapter 16 and they grumble again saying we'd be better off back in Egypt they were a forgetful people turning again on Moses their God given leader and doubting God's provision for them is it beyond a church to grumble or to allow its members to grumble about their God given leaders we must be very careful to not think that the Israelites were somehow stupid and we wouldn't be so foolish for how often do we sing songs together on a Sunday rightly singing that God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform rightly singing be still my soul the Lord is on your side rightly singing we trust in you our shield and our defender rightly singing in Christ alone our hope is found and suddenly

Sunday afternoon or Monday morning hits something we love is taken from us we've had another sleepless night the stress of work weighs down the feeling of loneliness bites and the temptation to prioritize what we can see in the here and now takes over from clinging to the promises of God or we sing on a Sunday evening rich as I heed not nor man's empty praise thy mine inheritance now and always and we get home and very quickly we slip into the old mindset that maybe maybe God hates me he hasn't done this for me because he doesn't love me maybe if God really loved me he'd give me an easier family an easier job it's very easy for us to sing songs about what Christ has done for us to sing songs of hope for what is coming one moment and then fickle the next we grumble about our lot in life it's not fair someone else everyone else has it easier than me we shouldn't have to put up with this it's too much maybe we'd be better off without

God if he's allowing me to face this maybe he doesn't care maybe I'd be better off in my old life maybe I'd be happier there maybe slavery would be better what we sing matters because remembering is an important means of keeping going that's why the Israelites were to celebrate the Passover every year that's why when they passed over the sea again they were to erect stones to remember it that's why they had a song book Israel needed to remember we need to remember when tragedy strikes when the odds seem stacked against us when the new year ends up just like this year with the same struggles we need to remember who God is what he has done what he's promised to do meeting together each week is not just about hearing a sermon we sing together and as we sing we can look around and see a building full of people singing the same things believing the same things clinging on to the same things enjoying the presence of their God together who knows what 2018 holds for us as a church it's inevitable that it will hold both sorrow and joy just like this year but one thing stays the same as each year passes the God that is revealed throughout

Exodus throughout the Bible doesn't change the God who is in our midst as we meet together he is mighty strong glorious in power majestic in holiness awesome in glorious deeds he will reign forever he is a man of war and all of this works to sustain and fulfill his covenant with his people all of this works against those who oppose his church all of this leads us in God's steadfast love guiding us to him all of this ensures that the greater canaan will be ours that even though this world will do all it can to silence and suffocate and stop the church the gates of hell will not prevail against us nothing can happen to us as a church that will change the truth of who God is nothing can change that we will by the guarantee of God's might we will by sight and joy all spiritual blessings we will enjoy by sight the heavenly

[ 31 : 45 ] Jerusalem we will enjoy by sight creation made new we will enjoy by sight our bodies resurrected to an imperishable glory so isn't he worth trusting in isn't it worth living with the eyes of faith that see who God is even what's in front of us and all around us seems to question it if forgetful people are easily troubled then when we're troubled we must remember who the Lord is and what he's done in his might so that we can look afresh at things through the eyes of faith with confidence for what will one day be ours by sight because we know who God is because we know who God is amen let's pray mighty heavenly father we give you great thanks that you have rescued us that you have redeemed us that you have revealed yourself in power to us strengthen our vision of who you are that we might be able to see the world around us with the eyes of faith with confidence in you for we ask it in

Jesus name amen