

The Lord, our Warrior
Exodus 15:1-11

After eight days of backpacking, Bob and his wife Sally were looking pretty scruffy. One morning, Sally came to breakfast, with her hair all messed up and sticking out at crazy angles. She asked, *“Does my hair make me look like a water buffalo?”* Bob thought for a moment and then said, *“If I tell you the truth, do you promise not to charge?”*

I think Bob was a rather brave man, saying that. Especially since he was afraid he might be attacked. To boldly fear no evil – such was the confidence of the Israelites in our Old Testament lesson for this Easter Sunrise. They were no longer afraid of being attacked by their enemies, the Egyptians, because they had already been vanquished, and there was nothing left to fear. In fact, as the Israelites stood safely on the shores of the Red Sea and watched their defeated enemies wash up on the beach, they were filled with joyful, confident praise. And our text is the song of triumph they sang to God, their Savior, the Lord, their Warrior.

My friends, what a perfect theme for this day – the Festival of our Lord’s Resurrection. After all, like the Israelites we too have nothing left to fear, because our enemies – Sin and Satan, Death and Hell – have now been vanquished forever. You might say, they’ve washed ashore at the empty tomb. They’re defeated enemies – weaponless and powerless to hurt us anymore. And so, on this Day of all days, we sing a joyful song of triumphant praise to Jesus our Savior, because He is the Lord our Warrior!

But you know, it wasn’t always that way for Israel. At one time they were common slaves, captives who were treated no better than cattle, driven to hard labor by the stinging lash of the master’s whip. Now you’d think that once God had sent the plagues, and gotten them out of their slavery, once He’d rescued them from Egypt, they would’ve been overjoyed. Having seen the miraculous wonders God had performed, they would’ve laid aside all their doubts and fears, and trusted Him implicitly. But they say that old habits die hard, and that’s especially

true with our sin. You see, the Israelites were barely out of Egypt and already they began to turn on Him. The book of Exodus tells us that when they came to the Red Sea and realized they were hemmed in on all sides with the Egyptian army in hot pursuit, they began to sneer at Moses, saying: “WHAT? WEREN’T THERE ENOUGH GRAVES IN EGYPT, THAT YOU HAD DRAG US OUT INTO THE DESERT TO BE BURIED IN THE SAND?”

What a bunch of ungrateful snobs! And yet, that same kind of faithless ingratitude lurks within each and every one of us – even on Easter morning. Think of Mary Magdalene and the women at the tomb, or Peter and John and the rest of the disciples. Although they had seen Jesus perform countless amazing miracles, like healing the sick and raising the dead, they were still filled with doubts and fears. They still did not trust His power to save. And my friends, as much as we might like to think otherwise, we are no different than them. In our stubborn, rebellious sinful nature, we are just as disloyal to God as they were.

Like when we whine and complain about our circumstances, instead of trusting God to hear and answer our prayers. Or when we worry and fret about our finances, instead of believing God’s promise that He will provide. When we get so overwhelmed with work and pressure that we take out our frustrations on our family and friends, perhaps even using God's name in vain, instead of using it to call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks. Or when we become so ‘me-centered’ that we can only see our own needs and hurts to the exclusion of everyone else’s. When we view our Christian faith with such a low-commitment level that we only worship on Christmas and Easter, and try to get by with doing as little for God as we can. Or when we are so filled with sorrow and self-pity that we doubt God even cares about us or could ever remedy our situation. Yes, like the Israelite’s in our text and the disciples in the New Testament, we all too often get caught up again in the slavery of our sin.

It reminds me a little bit of the story of Bert May. When he was first elected the mayor of Mount Sterling, Kentucky, an unfortunate incident generated some hateful phone calls to his home. One night

while he was out conducting a city council meeting, the phone rang at home and his wife answered. The woman on the other end of the line asked: *“Is this the home of Bert May, the mayor?”* Mrs. May said that it was, but that the mayor was at a meeting. However, if the woman would leave her name and number, he’d get back to her as soon as possible. The woman said: *“That’s confidential. You see, this is his girlfriend.”* Mrs. May, knowing it was a cruel trick, calmly replied: *“But honey, if you don’t leave your name and number, he won’t know which one to call back!”*

That humorous true story is all about commitment. The woman on the phone tried to make it look like the mayor was unfaithful. But he wasn’t. He was very much committed to his wife in love. Thankfully for us, so it is with our gracious God. Even though we are unfaithful and disloyal to Him, He remains faithfully committed to us in love, just like He was with the Israelites in our text. He didn’t viciously turn on them, like they did on Him. And He doesn’t do it to us either, because His heart is so saturated with the Gospel of Love in Jesus Christ, that He can’t help but do otherwise!

We see that clearly in our text, where it says that, **“THE LORD HAS TRIUMPHED GLORIOUSLY; THE HORSE AND HIS RIDER HE HAS THROWN INTO THE SEA.”** Instead of letting His people be trapped by their slave-masters, God parted the Red Sea and let Israel escape on dry land. They when the Egyptians pursued them, He threw the enemies into the depths of the sea, where they could never harm His people again. This was all a foreshadowing of what Jesus did for us on the cross, when He took all our sin and guilt and shame upon Himself, and buried them in the depths of His blood, so that they cannot us hurt or harm us any more. In other words, just as the Red Sea became a tunnel of escape for Israel, but a tomb of death for Egypt. In the same way, the cross of Christ became our means of escape from sin and hell, but it became the death-trap for Satan and his evil minions.

However, in order to accomplish that, Jesus had to fall into that death-trap for us. He allowed Himself to be crucified and buried in the tomb, so that He could lay all our sinful doubts and fears to rest once

and for all. And He proved it beyond the shadow of a doubt, by rising triumphant from the grave. That's the meaning of the phrase in our text: "THE LORD HAS TRIUMPHED GLORIOUSLY." In Hebrew, it's a verb that literally means: 'to rise up,' like a wave of the sea. It's the idea that God has risen up like a tidal-wave over our enemies, to wash away all our sin and guilt and shame. He is the tsunami that has wiped them out forever. That's what happened, when Jesus rose up from the grave on Easter morning. Just as the waves of the Red Sea rose up and came crashing down on Pharaoh and his wicked army, drowning them for good. Even so, when Jesus conquered the grave, the devil and all his wicked demons were drowned once and for all in the sea of God's saving power.

My friends, you and I experience that personally in the Resurrection of our Baptism. As Martin Luther so beautifully put it in His Baptismal prayer: "*Almighty and eternal God, You drowned hard-hearted Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, yet led Your people Israel through the water on dry ground, foreshadowing this washing of Your Holy Baptism.*" Which is to say: the Red Sea represents the cleansing waters of Baptism, in which our old Adam, along with all lusts and evil desires are drowned and die. But you and I have passed through death and hell on dry ground. The floodwaters of God's wrath and anger, judgment and condemnation don't even touch us, thanks to Jesus Christ, our Triumphant Savior.

That's why our text calls Him: "*The Lord, our Warrior.*" Or as it says in Hebrew, the Lord is 'the man of war.' As you may know, the *man-of-war* was the most powerful type of battle ship, from the 16th to the 19th centuries. It was armed with cannons and equipped with sails, to overtake the enemy and destroy them. And that's just what Jesus, our Warrior has done to our enemies: sin and Satan, death and hell. He blew them to pieces and destroyed them for good. He fought the battle by His atoning sacrifice on the cross, and won the war by His justifying resurrection from the grave. In the words of our text, He pursued the enemy and overtook them. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us that Pharaoh's army was completely routed, a word that means: 'to shake something off,' kind of like shaking dirt and dust off your clothes. It's a

beautiful reminder that because of Jesus' cross and tomb, every last speck and particle of our filthy, dirty transgression has been shaken off and done away with. We are completely forgiven and clean in Jesus Christ, our Warrior!

Back in January of 2007, Wes Autrey became known as the Hero of the New York City subway system, when he jumped onto the tracks to save a fellow passenger from an oncoming train. You see, Cameron Hollopeter had fallen between the tracks after suffering a seizure. Autrey immediately jumped down, rolled Cameron into a gap between the rails and covered him with his own body just as the train entered the station. Cameron Hollopeter is grateful to be alive today, thanks to Wes Autrey's heroic act!

Dear friends, that's how it must've been for the Israelites on the morning after they had crossed the Red Sea. God saved their life, by snatching them from the jaws of death. That's why they sang a triumphant song of thanks and praise to the Lord, their Warrior. But in an even better, that's how it is for you and me. We were almost goners. We had fallen down onto the tracks of sin and were about to be flattened forever. But at just the right time, Christ Jesus brought us back from the brink of death and granted us eternal life. That's what His resurrection is all about. He raised us up from the death of sin to the newness of life in His heavenly kingdom. May that move us to sing a triumphant song of praise to Him, not only in our music and worship this morning, but also in our actions and attitudes of service in His kingdom, every day of our life. For Jesus' sake. Amen.