

“What the Lord Has Done for ME”

Today we heard the beginning of the story of the Passover,  
the story of how God led God’s people on a journey out of slavery into freedom,  
through the sea towards their hearts’ desire, what God has promised them, a land of their own.  
But what intrigues me today is not the story itself, but what God commands *about* the story.

Listen again to these words:

God said,

<sup>12:17</sup> “Keep this Feast of the Unleavened Bread, for it was on this day I led your ranks out of Egypt....

<sup>24</sup> “You will keep this ritual as a perpetual observance for yourself and for your descendants....

And God continues in the next chapter:

<sup>13:8</sup> “You shall tell your child on that day,

*‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’*

<sup>9</sup> *It shall serve for you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead,  
so that the teaching of the LORD may be on your lips;  
for with a strong hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt.*

God wasn’t satisfied with just saving God’s people.

God wanted to make sure that they would remember –

they & their children, & their grandchildren, & their great-grandchildren...& so on & so forth....

For how long?

Forever.

But the really interesting thing is that God says,

*“You should tell your child on that day,*

*‘it is because of what the Lord did for ME when I came out of Egypt.’”*

*‘It is because of what the Lord did for ME’ –*

not for my father or my mother,

not for my grandparents or my great grandparents

not for my ancestors of long ago, but for me.

But, wait! How can this be?

How can a descendent of one of those Hebrew slaves talk about this as a personal experience  
when that person didn’t actually experience the event.

And that’s the point.

It’s not enough to individually remember what God has done in the past for other people.

It’s not enough to come together as a community

to remember what God has done in the past for other people.

It’s not enough to remember how we’ve remembered.

It’s not enough to come together to celebrate how we’ve come together.

It’s not enough to believe that an historical event happened.

It’s not enough to know what God has done in the long distant or even the more recent past.

It’s not enough to agree intellectually with a set of precepts or doctrines or beliefs.

It’s not enough to perform the rites and rituals and pass on the customs and traditions.

It’s not enough to perform good deeds and acts of kindness or to work for justice and peace.

What this passage is saying is that it's not enough to talk about what God did in the past for someone else; it's about what God has done for US - for YOU and for ME - in our lives.  
And by that I don't mean that Jesus' death bought us a ticket to heaven.  
This passage makes it clear that it's about what God does to save us in THIS life.

In his classic book, The Varieties of Religious Experience,  
19th century philosopher and psychologist, William James,  
distinguishes between primary religious encounters, which are direct personal experiences,  
and secondary religion, which involves teachings ABOUT the faith.

When God says, <sup>13:8</sup> "You shall tell your child on that day,  
'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt',  
what God is making clear is that faith must be grounded in personal experience.  
In other words, it's not enough to know ABOUT God, we must know God's very self.  
We must know God personally through our own direct personal experience of God.  
And not only must our faith be grounded in experience, we must share that experience with others –  
with our children & family, our friends & neighbors, and within & without our community of faith.

I'm not here today because I think coming here will get me to heaven or save me from hell.

I'm not here today because of what the Bible says.

I'm not here today because of what I've learned  
in Sunday school or confirmation class or church or seminary.

Of course all of those things were important in my life,  
but even all of them together are not enough to keep me here.

I'm here today because of what the Lord has done for ME.

I'm here today because of the big things God has done in my life.

I'm here today because I saw the risen Christ with my own eyes.

I'm here today because I felt the Holy Spirit come into my heart and change it.

I'm here today because God showed me a crystal clear vision of what God has in mind for me.

I'm here today because of the big things God has done in my life.

But I'm also here today because of the little things God does in my life all the time.

I'm here today because of the time I couldn't find my keys & I emptied out my purse onto the bed  
3 different times and there were no keys.

So I looked everywhere else I could think. Finally I prayed.

And Conner walked into the room and said, "Did you look in your purse?"

And I said, "Yes. Totally emptied it out 3 times." & he said, "Look again". & they were there.

I'm here today because 2 weeks ago the guy who painted my house a year ago  
asked me if I had seen Patrick, the homeless person he had hired to help him.

I said I hadn't & he asked me to keep a look out as he needed him on a new job. I didn't have a chance.

Then a week ago the painter came to get the 3 big ladders he had left at my house.

He only planned to stay a few minutes, but we got talking.

Several times he started to leave but then something else would come up, but finally he drove off.

Three minutes later he called, shouting, "You'll never guess who's in my truck!!! Patrick!!!"

He was just walking down the street and I saw him!

And he just put a deposit down on an apartment and is looking for work!

If I had left when I had planned - just a few minutes earlier - I never would have seen him!"

And I thought: "Wow! God really is in control, God is in the details & God's timing is impeccable!"

And not only was that meeting important to Patrick and the painter, but it was important to me, too,  
because I was struggling over why I had ended up in hospital & worried over continued symptoms  
but that God-sighting reminded me that God was indeed in control of everything.

It is God's desire to save us.

It is God's desire to free us from all that binds us or oppresses us or enslaves us.

It is God's desire to free us from whatever it is that keeps us from reaching our potential  
or from fulfilling our purpose  
or from reaching our dreams.

God wants nothing more than to fulfill the desires that God has placed within our hearts.

But what God desires is for us to notice what God is saying to us and doing in our lives.

God desires to talk with us, walk with us, work with us.

And when God gives us something or does something for us or blesses us in some way,

God not only expects us to say a quiet, private thank you,

but to tell our families and friends, to proclaim it in our church, and to shout it to the world.

What has the Lord done for YOU?

Whatever it is, give thanks to God!

But don't just bless the Lord.

Don't just worship God's holy name!

Share your experience!

Proclaim God's power and love!

And tell everyone you meet what it is that the Lord has done - for YOU. Amen!