

“Mary and the First Commandment”

Exodus 20:1-3 Easter Sunday 2017

Now, you might be thinking, “Exodus and Easter?” Mary and the First Commandment?” What’s up with that? My April preaching is on a character in each Gospel lesson, in addition to Jesus. Today, either Mary will do. Having examined the Ten Commandments in reverse order since Ash Wednesday, we are left only with the first and foremost one: *You shall have no other Gods before you.*

But that is not the first commandment the Mary learned. In Hebrew they are called Words. The first one is not God telling His people what to do, but reminding them of what He had already done for them. It is in Exodus 20. ¹*And God spoke all these words, saying,* ²*“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.* That is the first one. The second is ³*“You shall have no other gods before me.* The first is all Gospel. It is the whole reason that we should fear, love and trust God above all things and people. If we do that, we know that living by the other commandments will result in great blessings for us.

How God brought them out of slavery begins at the burning bush. God tells Moses that he has heard the cries of his people in bondage. He enlists Moses to set them free from the powerful Egyptian Pharaoh. Well this seems so incredible to Moses that he ask God for His business card. Whom shall I say sent me? God replies, *“Tell them “I AM has sent you. That is the name forever by which I will be remembered through all generations.”*

Fast forward a few generations to Mary’s time. A certain Jewish rabbi has gotten himself into a lot of hot water with the Jewish leaders by saying things like I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I AM the Good Shepherd, I AM the Door, I AM the Light of the World. I AM the True Vine. I AM the Bread of Life. By the particular way he was saying I AM, those religious leaders understood full well that Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God. That was blasphemy and worthy of death. They arranged it. Good Friday came and went. He was crucified, buried and done. Move on.

Not so fast. Jesus had also said, I AM the Resurrection and the Life. The Marys realize he was telling the truth as they see that He is not where he was buried and hear the testimony of the angels, and then see Jesus himself in person.

Jesus, the I AM who promised deliverance for Moses and all Israel, who was the bread of life in the wilderness that kept them alive on their way to the Promised Land, the I AM who raised Lazarus from the dead four days after his burial. This I AM, is not where they left him. He’s not dead. He is not and never will be the I WAS! He is who said he is, the Resurrection and the Life.

The Bible tells us that it is not just his own resurrection that matters to God. St. Paul writes that he is the first of those who die in faith, of those that will be raised again forever. Because I live, Jesus, tells us, you also will live.

What Mary was looking at, whether or not she understood it, was the fulfillment of God’s big picture promise--not just to the Israelites whom he delivered from physical bondage-- but of a much older and broader promise to all. To Eve, the mother of all who live, he promised a savior to be born of her descendents who would destroy the works of the devil. He would restore the broken fellowship Adam and Eve had perfectly enjoyed with God and with each other. Easter is God’s assurance to us that he has not forgotten his promise to Eve.

In delivering His people from slavery, God had Moses tell the people to paint the blood of an unblemished Passover lamb on the post and cross beam of the doors to their houses. Those living in houses with this blood God delivered from death and bondage.

Our Passover Lamb is Jesus, whom John called the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Cleansed by His blood shed on the cross we pass over from death to life. Sins forgiven, freedom delivered, we need no longer be slaves to hopelessness, addictions, despair, and the crushing weight of guilt.

We stand at the empty tomb with Mary and realize with her that he who was dead God made alive. We who were dead in sin, God also makes alive, in, with, and through Christ. If God has done that for us then we can agree with Luther that we should not fear, love, or trust anything but the one true God.

Remember God’s big picture of deliverance for the whole world and for you. Easter began in Eden with a promise to Eve. Easter echoed in Egypt where the Exodus foreshadowed the freedom God offers you today.

Because of the crucifixion and resurrection of the great I AM, Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb of God, God is still changing lives and freeing people from bondage. He has won your salvation. Therefore, He deserves

your exclusive worship. There is no other God except the One who has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus. To Him alone be all the glory. Christ has risen! Alleluia. Amen.