

**Sun., March 18: Second Sunday of Lent**

Threshold: Blood on the Door of Passover

Sermon: Thresholds #2: Door of Decision

Scripture: Exodus 12:21-28 (The Passover Door)

Text: Exodus 12:22 “Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning.”

Memory Verse: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don’t rely on your own intelligence. Know Him in all your paths, and He will keep your ways straight.” -Proverbs 3:5-6

Children’s Lesson: Blood in the Bible is for protection and healing. -Andrew

Missions Moment: Soap Drive, Youth Mission Trip, & Gideons

Blurb: Doors often represent a choice: do we go through or not? The next threshold in the Biblical story is the doorframe in the Passover story. The Israelites are slaves in Egypt. God promises to set them free. Yet they must trust in God’s protection, and show that trust in a strange act of obedience: They must make a sacrifice and spread the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. Those that did were spared death and set free! This Sunday we’ll learn how Jesus became our Passover Lamb. Our “Door of Decision” is if we will trust in Him and live in obedience, even when the calling is strange.

**Call to Worship:** *Hymn Sing* -Andrew

**Welcome:** -Pastor David

Happy St. Patrick’s Day!

St. Patrick was a British boy who was captured in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and taken as a slave to Ireland. He escaped, but later returned, believing God had sent him there as a missionary. He famously said, “I must return to the land of my slavery, so I can offer them freedom from their slavery to sin.” When he trying to explain God as Trinity to one of the kings, the king promised to convert to Christianity if he could explain how God could one and three at the same time. Patrick when off to pray for inspiration, kneeling down in the lush green field. He opened his eyes, and between his knees he saw a three-leaf clover. The field was covered with them. He picked the clover and took it to the king, asking if the leaf was one or three. The king said he could not say, and Patrick said it was the same with God. The king converted, and by the time Patrick died, most of Ireland had been converted. To this day the shamrock, the three-leaf clover, a symbol for the Christian God, is the symbol of Ireland.

**Memory Verse:**

Our memory verse reminds us that although we can know lots about God, there are parts we cannot understand. So, like the Irish king, we need to trust in God, and not in our own understanding. Let’s try this verse together:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don’t rely on your own intelligence. Know Him in all your paths, and He will keep your ways straight.” -Proverbs 3:5-6

**Worship Music:** - Sanctify

*Threshold of Glory*

*Trust and Obey*

*No Longer Slaves*

Worship Prayer - Andrew

**Serve Moment:** Soap Drive -Andrew

Youth Mission Trip Fundraiser -Cassi

Gideons -Ron Petterson

**Offering:** *Lift Up Your Heads* - Sanctify

**Kids Moment:** -Andrew

**Prayers:** -Andrew

**Message Bumper**

**Message:** Thresholds #3: The Door of Decision

**PP#1:** *A collage of images: seraphim at the Garden entrance, Noah's ark, Passover doorway covered in blood, Ark of Covenant behind the temple curtain, the tomb and stone.*

As we head to Easter, we're telling the story of the Bible, and we're doing it by noticing the different doorways, entrances, portals, and gateways, that seem almost to appear randomly throughout the Bible's grand story. But they aren't random at all! And so, I've crafted this message series around these intriguing images of thresholds. I'm calling it, "Thresholds: The Story of the Bible, The Story of Salvation."

We started off with the cherubim holding flaming swords blocking the entrance to the Garden of Eden and it's Tree of Eternal Life. Adam and Eve were the first of all humans who turn their trust away from God and onto themselves. This "fall" from God's intended perfection, has left the human race trapped as slaves to sin and death, barred from life as God intended. As soon as they leave the garden, God warns Cain that sin is "crouching at his *door*." But he doesn't listen to God and instead murders his brother Able.

The next door is the door of Noah's ark. Sin had grown to corrupt the entire world, and to save the last glimmer of light, God washed away all creatures except Noah and his family and the ark. God closed them inside the ark's *door*, a door of safety and protection. You can see the images of these salvation stories being collected around our tomb of calvary up here in the front.

**PP#2:** Thresholds: The Door of Decision

"Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning." -Exodus 12:22

Today, our message is "Thresholds: The Door of Decision." Exodus 12:22, "Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning."

**PP#3: *Image of deMill's 10 Commandments w/Charles Heston***

The story of the Passover and Exodus is one of the most famous stories of the Bible. And we're discovering that all of the individual stories of the Bible not only tell a much bigger story all together, but each one separately tells the story of God's salvation, too. God comes to address the problem of the human condition. This shows God's character unlike what we were able to see back in creation. We see a God of grace and mercy and second chances, although struggling within the constraints of sin and death that people have chosen and spread. Why is God so violent in the Old Testament? Because He is fighting from within the violence and hate and death to which people have become slaves, and God is fighting our way out of it. We see all this in the story of the Exodus.

**PP#4: *Image for Abraham in Canaan.***

The story actually starts back with Abraham. Four hundred years after the flood, God calls Abraham and family to move to a land that God promises to give to Abraham's descendants. Today we call it Israel. Abraham travels there, but God says that the local people's sin isn't quite deserving yet of their punishment to have the Hebrews come in, defeat them, and take over. Abraham's grandson, Jacob, moves the family down to Egypt where his son, Joseph, has been made Prime Minister under Pharaoh.

Well, another 400 years pass, and now the Hebrews have grown to be a great people, perhaps a million strong. The Egyptians had grown fearful of them, and so had made them their slaves. So, God's chosen people, whom God had called for His own, are stuck in slavery in a foreign land.

What is the God of the Bible, the God of salvation, going to do? Any guesses?

**PP#5: Exodus 3:7-10 (CEB)**

7 Then the Lord said, "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. 8 I've come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that's full of milk and honey, a place where the Canaanites ... all live. 9 Now the Israelites' cries of injustice have reached me. I've seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. 10 So get going. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

We hear it in Exodus 3, when God speaks to a shepherd named Moses at a burning bush. Moses was a Hebrew, who had grown up in the Egyptian court, and who had fled in exile after he killed an Egyptian slave master in an attempt to protect some Hebrews.

God says to Moses from the burning bush, verse 7, "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. I've come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and take them to a good and broad land, a land that's full of milk and honey."

See how God is a redeeming God? He knows their plight, and He is coming to fix things.

But look at this verse more. There is a very important assertion that God is pushing. Notice how He talks *about* the people. He says, "I've seen *MY* people." It's a pivotal assertion. God claims ownership of them. And so what's coming, in essence, is a custody battle. "They are my people, they belong to me. They have strayed down into a foreign land. They have been made slaves. And I've come down to get them back. Even though they may have forgotten their identity, I," says God, "remember the covenant I made with their forefathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

And with the backdrop of the grand Bible story, remembering, even if only vaguely, what God did in the time of Noah, this pronouncement by God should send chills down your spine. Look out Egypt. You've taken the momma bear's cubs. And now she's coming! It ain't gonna be pretty!

So, as the story beings, and Moses goes back to Egypt, to his people AND to the royal palace where he was raised, what unfolds is one of the most mighty showdowns in of all history.

**PP#6:** *Image for the might and splendor of ancient Egypt.*

Egypt, you see, was the greatest civilization in ancient history. It was the most developed, organized, resource-rich, powerful, civilizations and it was able to sustain this over centuries. One of the secrets of their sustained success was the Nile River, which brought flooding waters to irrigate what would otherwise be a desert wasteland. Under good management, crops were plentiful, livestock grew in abundance, and civilization flourished.

Now, like every ancient culture, a religious system was developed in Egypt that attributed their success to the power of gods who were believed to control nature, fertility, and life itself. What Egypt could brag, however, was that their gods *must* be more powerful than other gods, because of their civilization's uniquely sustained prosperity throughout ancient history.

The king, pharaoh, was believed to be the link between the gods and the people. And, from time to time, the pharaohs were believed to be inhabited by the gods. And then, the pharaohs were believed to be partially divine, and that they became gods when they died. And then, some of them even asserted that they were gods while still living as kings.

Now, although this is not unheard of in ancient civilizations, this brazen claim is important to understand as Moses come tromping in through the door. You see, Moses was raised in this teaching. He had to make a choice. Which god was real? The gods of Egypt, or the God who spoke to him through the burning bush. He had to cross a threshold of decision.

Same with the Hebrew people. Moses told them that their God was going to free them. But most of them barely knew about Him. What they did know was the might and power of Egypt, the superpower of its day, and with their world's largest and best-trained army.

God is inviting them across the same threshold of decision. Who will you follow? Who will you trust?

**PP#7:** Exodus 5:1-2 (CEB)

1 Afterward, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the Lord, Israel's God, says: 'Let my people go so that they can hold a festival for me in the desert.'"

2 But Pharaoh said, "Who is this Lord whom I'm supposed to obey by letting Israel go? I don't know this Lord, and I certainly won't let Israel go."

So God has Moses, who is now 80, walk straight up to the pharaoh—who by this time was probably the son of the boy that Moses grew up with—and lay down God's demand. It's a religious challenge, and everyone knows it! Moses says, "Israel's God has appeared to us and says, 'Let my people go.'" Notice what Pharaoh asks, verse 2, "Who is Lord whom I'm supposed to obey by letting Israel go? I don't know this Lord, and I certainly won't let Israel go."

You see, Egypt assumed that Israel had a God. Every people had one. But obviously Israel's God was a wimp. After all, Egypt's gods were in control and made his people slaves. Israel's God was not a worry.

Do you see how this is a God-show-down? Who really is the most mighty God? Who is the only real God? Who can be trusted? Who must be obeyed? Pharaoh is sitting in his position of power, privilege, mastery. He's not budging. He believes his god is bigger!

So, over the course of the next nine cycles, the pattern repeats. God, through Moses, claims the Israelites are His people, and that they must obey Him, not pharaoh. He also challenges Pharaoh's authority, treating him like a pawn. You know, it's hilarious how God won't even acknowledge pharaoh enough to speak to him directly. He sends a spokesperson to talk to pharaoh like some insignificant figurehead. And in 10 displays of power, God shows that it is He, not pharaoh, who controls all things. One by one, God strips away pharaoh's assets. The Nile River, the lifeblood of Egypt, God turns to blood. Protection and security swarmed by unending frogs. Greenery, eaten away by locust. Crops, pummeled by hail. Livestock, stricken by pestilence. The people themselves, covered in gnats and boils. And each and every time, pharaoh can do nothing to stop it. Each time pharaoh reluctantly admits defeat, calls Moses back in, asks their God to remove the plague, and promises to let the people go.

And, each cycle, when the danger is over, and pharaoh feels a bit less vulnerable, he goes back on his promise and keeps the people as slaves. Now, I kind of get it. Pharaoh is looking like fool. He is being manhandled by the God of their slaves. Who will the Egyptians trust? They might revert to the Hebrew God. And so, time and again, he proclaims the power of the gods that he believes had made Egypt great to start with, and leads by example putting his trust in them.

**PP#8:** *Image for Amun-Ra, or statue of him in the form of a Pharaoh*

Now, you need to know that the pinnacle of the Egyptian pantheon was the god of the sun, Ra, or Amun-Ra. This was Egypt's most mighty and feared god. So, after eight rounds of God stripping Egypt of its protection, vitality, fertility, crops, and livestock, Israel's God goes after the big one. In a brazen challenge in front of Amun-Ra and the pharaoh who was supposedly inhabited by him, Moses says the Israelite God will effortlessly extinguish the sun right in its place in the noon sky. Although spectacular, the cycle happens again. Pharaoh changes his mind and keeps the Israelites.

So, having stripped pharaoh and Egypt of all its power, God now takes away the last important thing: the oldest son. The oldest son, you see, guaranteed the continuance of a person's legacy, and was the heir to pharaoh's throne. Also, in ancient cultures, the first born male was always consecrated as belonging to the gods. It was the ultimate expression of a trust in one's deity. This was true in nearly all ancient cultures, and certainly in Egypt.

God is saying, the God to whom your first born belongs is not your piddly gods of Egypt. It has been, and always will be, me, the one true God! I am the true God. We settle this, now! The tenth time, always in Scripture, means complete. This battle is now over.

**PP#9:** Exodus 7:4-5 "When Pharaoh refuses to listen to you, then I'll act against Egypt and I'll bring my people the Israelites out of the land of Egypt in military formation by momentous events of justice. 5 The Egyptians will come to know that I am the Lord, when I act against Egypt and bring the Israelites out from among them."

Exodus 12:12 "I'll pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I'll strike down every oldest child in the land of Egypt, both humans and animals. I'll impose judgments on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord."

So, God lays out the challenge. After all you've seen, after all you now know, in whom will you put your trust? God makes sure everyone knows, not just the Israelites, but He also made sure that all the Egyptians knew it, too (Exodus 11:4-8). God proclaims, "On the upcoming night, I'm coming to take your first born. He belongs to me: not to you, or to your gods. Mine. You won't relent. You won't give in. I have asked for my people, but you keep them captive. I will now come and show you that can at any moment take what is mine. I am the one and only true God!"

"Now, I am a gracious, long-suffering God. I so I will mercifully let you keep your first born son, if you acknowledge that I am the only true God. I will require a sacrifice that shows your trust."

**PP#10:** Exodus 12:21-28 (CEB)

21 Then Moses called together all of Israel's elders and said to them, "Go pick out one of the flock for your families, and slaughter the Passover lamb. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood that is in the bowl, and touch the beam above the door and the two doorposts with the blood in the bowl. None of you should go out the door of your house until morning. 23 When the Lord comes by to strike down the Egyptians and sees the blood on the beam above the door and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over that door. He won't let the destroyer enter your houses to strike you down. ...

Exodus 12, starting with verse 21, "Then Moses called together all of Israel's elders and said to them, [he had just given the same instructions to the Egyptians back in the previous chapter. Now same to the Israelites, God says,] 'Go pick out one of the flock for your families, and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood that is in the bowl, and touch the beam above the door and the two doorposts with the blood in the bowl. None of you should go out the door of your house until morning. When the Lord comes by to strike down the Egyptians and sees the blood on the beam above the door and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over that door. He won't let the destroyer enter your houses to strike you down.' . . .

**PP#11:** Exodus 12:21-28 (CEB)

"24 You should observe this ritual as a regulation for all time for you and your children. 25 When you enter the land that the Lord has promised to give you, be sure that you observe this ritual. 26 And when your children ask you, 'What does this ritual mean to you?' 27 you will say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for the Lord passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. When He struck down the Egyptians, He spared our houses.'" The people then bowed down and worshipped. 28 The Israelites went and did exactly what the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron to do.

Verse 24, . . . "You should observe this ritual as a regulation for all time for you and your children. When you enter the land that the Lord has promised to give you, be sure that you observe this ritual. And when your children ask you, 'What does this ritual mean to you?' you will say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for the Lord passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. When He struck down the Egyptians, He spared our houses.'" The people then bowed down and worshipped. The Israelites went and did exactly what the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron to do." They make their decision.

Did you see the door here in this story? It is the door frame of every home throughout Egypt. God declared, "If you put your trust in me as your one true God, sacrifice the Passover Lamb who will save you from impending death. By the blood shed of that sacrificial lamb, the death of your

oldest has been paid. I will give him back to you. Israelites and Egyptians, anyone who does this, will be spared.” It the threshold of decision. In whom are you going to trust?

You see, Adam and Eve in the Garden wanted for themselves to choose between good and evil. They wanted to be masters of their own futures, fates, destinies. They thought they would be in control, putting their trust in themselves. But what God always knew, and what we see as the story unfolds, is that they don’t receive freedom: they receive slavery! First it was slavery to sin and violence, all the time, everywhere. Here in Exodus we see the Israelites enslaved to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians enslaved to false gods.

This is the story of salvation! This is the story of the Bible. People who belong to God, whose identity is God’s very image, have gotten themselves into a mess. They put their trust in themselves, and it gets them kicked out of the good thing that God gave them back in Eden. It gets them ensnared in violence, hatred, and death. It gets them the bonds of slavery, subject to and victims of the world’s strong powers.

But God proclaims, “They are my people. I have heard their cry. I have seen their plight. And I have come to free them!” And every Israelite, who spread blood on the doorpost, is *pushed out* of Egypt by all those who didn’t. Read the next chapter some time. God, by His might, frees them from even the strongest worldly power, and leads them to the Promised Land.

**PP#12:** *A created image pairing the blood on the doorposts and the blood on Jesus’ cross*

Can you see Jesus here? This is the story of salvation! Fifteen hundred years later, when the time was finally right, God implements the ultimate act of redemption. God’s people are slaves to all the strong powers of this world, to their own loss of identity, to the ultimate power of sin and death. And God says through clenched teeth, “They are *my* people. I have heard their cry. I have seen their plight. And I have come to free them!” And on the night celebrating the Passover, Jesus stops the meal and says, “This is my body broken for you. This is my blood shed for you.” And within hours, Jesus’s blood drips down the cross. God gives up His first born to become the Passover Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. He earns our freedom from our slavery. He releases us for our Promised Land.

I want you to hear this story of salvation for you today. When you put your trust in yourself, or some other false God, you become trapped, a slave. You may feel stuck. You may know this relentless reality yourself. But I want you to hear the story of the Bible. You belong to God. You are His! His image flickers inside you. And He acts to set you free. He sees your plight. He hears your cry. And Jesus comes to you, to offer you the freedom from your slavery to sin and death that He has won for you. All you need to do is to put your trust back in Him.

**PP#13:** *Image of persons kneeling and praying at a prayer railing*

I’m going to call for an altar call of sorts. Over here, in this left-hand section of seats in front of the model tomb, we’ll make this our decision center. Sanctify, perhaps you could come on up front and make some room there. As we sing our closing song, if you want to make a decision to put your trust in Jesus, and you want to physically cross the threshold, then I invite you to come up to this area, during the closing song. Pastor Dan, and Cassi, our minister of Youth, and I will be ready to pray with you if you want. Just come up, sit down, and then make eye contact with one of us, and we’ll come over to pray with you. If you want to pray on your own, you are free to do that, where you are now, or up here in front of the tomb.

We come to this threshold, smeared with blood. It is the threshold of decision. What will you do? Which God will you take as yours? Will you put your trust back in God?  
Let's pray.

**Closing Song:** *Be Thou My Vision* -Sanctify

**Memory Verse:**

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don't rely on your own intelligence. Know Him in all your paths, and He will keep your ways straight.” -Proverbs 3:5-6

**Announcements:** -David

**Benediction:** -David

“May the road rise up to meet you,  
may the wind be always at your back,  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
and the rain fall soft upon your fields,  
and until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.”  
Amen. Go in peace.