The Boomerang Effect Memory Verse: Exodus 14:13

Jan. 1st, 2023 Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 1:13-19

**SLIDE 1: Title**

 Well, we have made it into the new year! Congratulations to us! Some of us have crossed over that finish line with strength and a great outlook on the year that is coming. Some of us have been dragged along to make it this far. And even though we tend to put a lot of pressure onto New Year’s day, it is in fact, nothing more than another day. We change a number at the end of the year, from 22 to 23 but when you woke up this morning, you were you and your home was your home and really nothing changed.

 But in the newness of the year, we are supposed to change right? We are supposed to actually use that gym membership that we purchased last year, we’re supposed to eat better, we are supposed to spend less on certain things and maybe give more to other things. We are supposed to set goals and do our darndest to achieve them. New Year’s day is about change, about improvement, about living better…but of course, by the end of New Year’s week we eventually realize all that changed was the number at the end of the date. 2023.

 But change is relative right. One person’s new year’s resolutions are going to be very different from another person’s. Maybe you have even heard those words spoken, “People don’t change.”

**SLIDE 2: “People don’t change.”**

Maybe you have even said that to yourself about yourself, “I’ll never change…” And that usually comes across as a very cynical statement. As good as we might be, there will always need to be something that needs tweaking, upgrading, refreshing. Even those of us who are a totally new creation in Christ…we too need a change. It is all too easy to revert to our old selves and leave important churchy words like, “transformation” and “sanctification” at the door.

 Indeed, even the best of us are far from flawless. Everyone of us needs healing, release, forgiveness, a second chance…a new year. And a quick glance at the state of our world reveals an even more dire need: Mass shootings, increased drug use, rampant homelessness, political and cultural divide, war and displacement. So here we stand together on the cusp of that new year thinking through all the ways we need change and all the ways we are likely to fail at bringing it about.

 And if I have you feeling down here today, that is alright, because it is precisely in that valley where hope begins! See, any stock I put in myself to affect positive change in this world is a false hope. I am not capable. On my own, I am a broken person trying to fix other broken people…I can’t bring healing, or peace or newness of life. It’s better for me to realize that at the outset. We cannot hope in ourselves, or even in our fellow man…We put our hope on God alone…our help comes from God alone. Change in this world will come from the hand of God alone…and yet not God alone…He has chosen to involve us in the process…Let me explain what I mean.

**SLIDE 3: Boomerang**

 Have you ever tried to use a boomerang? They sell all kinds; from heavy wooden authentic boomerangs to cheap plastic toys, my boys even spent a day making some out of notebook paper the other day. Traditionally, boomerangs hail from Australia and were initially used as a weapon for hunting, especially birds. The genius of the boomerang is that, when properly thrown, it comes back to you. One does not have to go searching for missing arrows, the boomerang comes back in hand ready to be used again.

 Pastor and author Dutch Sheets has borrowed the idea of a boomerang and has applied it to what we might call prophetic action or prophetic declaration. And while that sounds like heavy bible terms, to prophecy is to say or do something for God. This is what the ancient prophets did. They were given a word to speak or an action to do and they said those words or did that thing. John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord. He spoke to people about repentance and performed the action of baptizing people in water. His prophetic work prepared the way for God to work upon the earth.

 This then, is how we really implement change in this world.

Our declarations go out from us in this world, they are received by God in the spiritual world, He then affects change within our physical world. So the boomerang, the reality that we are proclaiming, travels from us to God and back to us as a new reality.

**SLIDE 4: Exodus 1410-12: As Pharaoh drew closer, the Israelites looked back and saw the Egyptians marching toward them. The Israelites were terrified and cried out to the Lord. 11They said to Moses, “Weren’t there enough graves in Egypt that you took us away to die in the desert? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt like this? 12Didn’t we tell you the same thing in Egypt? ‘Leave us alone! Let us work for the Egyptians!’ It would have been better for us to work for the Egyptians than to die in the desert.”**

 In Exodus 14 the Hebrew people are fleeing from Pharaoh only to hit a dead end at the Red Sea. They are caught and doomed to forever live under the rule of Egypt’s king. Let’s pick up the story in verse 10 (READ 10-12) So we can see the outpouring of gratitude here from the people. But like the text says, they were afraid. And out of that fear, they had no faith. All they could see was a rehashing if the slavery they knew all too well. They wanted change in their world, but they could do nothing to bring that change about. And in their fear and powerlessness, they crumpled. The only option they saw was defeat. That can certainly be us at times. The circumstances of this world can leave us fearful…helpless. Sometimes all we can see is defeat. What we need in those moments, what the people of Israel needed, was a little faith! And Moses, in a prophetic role, supplies that faith with a bold and impossible declaration! Verse 13-14 READ

**SLIDE 5: Exodus 14:13-14 13 But Moses said to the people, “Don’t be afraid. Stand your ground, and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never ever see again. 14 The Lord will fight for you. You just keep still.”**

Don’t be afraid, stand your ground and watch. And then verse 15-16 READ

**SLIDE 6: Exodus 14:15-16 15Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to get moving. 16As for you, lift your shepherd’s rod, stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it in two so that the Israelites can go into the sea on dry ground.**

God speaks to Moses and commands him to lift up his rod in order to split to sea in two. Have you ever thought about this detail in the story? Why does God ask Moses to do such a thing? Couldn’t God have done the exact same thing with or without a rod involved? Did God even need Moses at all? The answer is “yes and no”. Yes, we believe God is almighty and all powerful. We don’t believe that Moses had any magical power in and of himself to affect any change in the sea, but at the same time, God sort of gives Moses the credit. He says lift your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea and spit it in two. It does not say do these actions and then I will split the sea in two. The reality here is that God has chosen, in his wisdom and mercy, to work in this world through the faith of his people. And when Moses prophetically declares God’s salvation in the midst of certain defeat, he demonstrates the faith that God is looking for. And when Moses raises his staff into the air, when he obeys what seems to be a useless and arbitrary command, he effectively tosses a boomerang into the heavens where God receives it and sends it back into the natural world of slavery and warfare and brokenness and ingratitude to affect change on that shoreline of the Red Sea. So yes, it was all God, all his power, all his plan and yet, somehow he could not have done it without a faithful prophet like Moses.

 This story is one example of faith releasing God’s power on this earth. Does that mean that without faith, God’s power is not released on this earth? I would say, more often than not it does. This is why our obedience is so crucial! We obey not just to be in good standing before good. We are not merely trying to keep God from being angry with us. The fact is, God has a lot of plans for this world. He has storehouses of blessings to pour out upon our neighborhoods and our families. So what is he waiting for? He is waiting for us! He is looking for some faithful children who will launch a boomerang in faith so that his supernatural power can be released and returned upon this earth. Then we will see change…then we will see His kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

 This principle was even true of Jesus in his earthly ministry. In Matthew’s gospel we read a little recap of Jesus’ time in Nazareth, his hometown. Chapter 13 verse 58 reads, “He was unable to do many miracles there because of their disbelief.”

**SLIDE 7: He was unable to do many miracles there because of their disbelief. Matt. 13:58**

 The good work the Jesus had planned for Nazareth, the miracles that he was prepared to do and the blessings that could have been, never were because there was not a sufficient amount of faith available. Somehow our faith releases the power of God in this world.

 Closely related to faith is obedience. When God tells us to do something, we need to do it! My son Ezra is a pro at asking “Why?” If he is told to do anything, his response is “Why?” “Why should I? Why do I have to? Why doesn’t Silas have to? Why right now?...You get the picture. And it’s clear to his mother and I that these questions do not spring forth from an inquiring mind, but rather they originate from a disobedient heart. Can you imagine God commanding Moses to lift up his staff and Moses replying with a scrunched face and a “Why would I do that?” No! As confused as Moses may have been, he chose rather to obey than to be informed. God has spoken, I will obey.

**SLIDE 8: Our faithfulness does not stand on information.**

 Our next important principle: Our faithfulness does not stand on information. Now, that is not to say that our faith is uninformed. We know certain things about God, we have information about him in his world, we have information about him through the natural world that surrounds us, through creation. But what I mean to say is that our faithful actions do not have complete information. We do not always get to know why. We do not understand why God works in the way he does and we do not know why he asks us to do certain things. We trust him, so we obey.

 One of my professors in college went through the tough experience of raising a prodigal. Maybe some of us have undergone that same trial. Her son decided to run from God, to not live within the rules and boundaries of his home. During the end of high school and his freshman year of college, Greg would not come home at night, he would involve himself with drinking and other such activities the extent of which was unknown. This son needed change in his life, but my professor, Rachel, was powerless to do anything with her adult son. But she knew something that we talked about during our Advent series…our helplessness combined with faith results in prayer. She knew that she could not affect change in the heart and mind of her son. She also knew that the path he was traveling was not God’s will for him, so she turned to prayer. She faithfully declared a different future for her son. She faithfully declared God’s promises for him. She faithfully sent up a boomerang. And as she engaged in this prophetic work, she was led to also act in prophetic ways. For example, when Greg would not come home at night, Rachel would not just pray but she would go into his room and pray while sitting in his bed. She would declare God’s will within his very room. Now, we know there is no magic to such an act. The value of a prayer does not depend on it’s location, right? But again, our obedience to engage in prophetic acts unleashes the power of heaven into this world. Soon, when Greg would come home, for some reason he would choose to sleep on the couch. We wanted to avoid his bed and his room. So Rachel began to pray over the couch. And soon this spot too became somewhere to avoid. Eventually, God reclaimed his son Greg and brought him back home. Greg was apparently slow to get the memo, but Jesus came to him in a dream. He simply asked Greg, “Don’t you believe I’m real? Why are you living like this?” This supernatural encounter with God recalibrated Greg’s life. He was able to come to a place of repentance and restoration. He was able to come back home for good. God’s power came to bear on Greg’s life because Greg’s mother sent up a boomerang that God used to affect change in his life.

 Rachel was my college English professor. She was not some bigwig church leader or someone you would consider a powerful prophet of God…she was a mother who loved God and loved her son. My point here is that we do not need to reach a certain pinnacle of power or prestige or persuasion.

**SLIDE 9: God is the One who is powerful**

 God is the One who is powerful and he has given us the means by which we can access his power to affect change in this world. It comes down to our faith and obedience. Moses didn’t know why he was supposed to lift his staff, Rachel didn’t know why she was supposed to pray in a specific place. We trust that God knows. We trust that through our declarations and actions, through the boomerangs that we launch, they will return to us with the supernatural power of God.

 There is one more thing that we cannot forget: Our declarations must always reflect God’s will. I cannot prophetically declare myself to be the winner of the next lottery. I mean I could, but that would be an example of false prophecy. It does not fall in line with God’s word. It might potentially be a good thing, but that does not make it a part of God’s will. And it’s true that we will never know all the ins and outs of God’s will, at least not in this life, but we can be certain of some things. Here a just a few:

**SLIDE 10: 3 Points**

1. It is his will that we would be holy, pure, untainted, sinless. 1 Peter 1:16 recounts Leviticus 19 when he quotes, “Be holy, because I am holy.” We are to become like him, to be like Christ. His will is for us to put aside the old and put on the new.
2. It is not his will that anyone should perish. Again from Peter, but this time 2 Peter 3:9, the Lord desires that everyone change their heart and mind. Jesus died for every man, woman and child. His will is for all to come to know him.
3. And for another one here, let me go back to what Moses says in Exodus, “Don’t be afraid. Stand your ground and watch the LORD rescue you today.” It is God’s will to help us, to rescue us, to save us. It is his will that we do not fear, but that we would stand strong in faith.

So when it come to throwing boomerangs into heaven, we have some important aspects of God’s will work with. Our prophetic declarations for victory over sin, that is, holiness or for the sake of the lost, or for help in time of need, or for strength to stand…all of these cries agree with God’s will. When we demonstrate a little faith and declare God’s will over these situations, we launch a boomerang that returns to us with nothing short of the divine power of God himself, power to affect change, power to impact this year ahead.

**SLIDE 11: Where is God calling you to faith?**

Where is God calling you to faith? In what places in your life have you struggled to trust him? When you look at the coming year, where do you see a need for change? What biblical truth can you declare over the situations you face? I want to include a plug for our P.A.X. teams here as well. These teams provide us a place where we can declare together the will of God over our lives and our church and our community. Joining up with one of our prayer teams is a great way to step forward in faith as well as into the new year. I do not want to let another year go by without seeing the change we hope for. So instead of trying to conjure up magic within ourselves, let’s give is problem over to God. Let’s declare his will over the situation, let’s obey his promptings and unleash His power and be ready to catch that boomerang as it comes back to bless us!

AMEN.