

Old Testament: Exodus 5: 1 - 14  
New Testament: John 20: 11 - 18

Please pray with me. And now Lord God may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts, be pleasing and acceptable in Thy sight our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Pharaoh lived in a story of not enough. Think about how the line of Pharaohs had forgotten the abundance of God as demonstrated through Joseph. Joseph accurately told the Pharaoh that he dreamed of a feast and famine type situation that was approaching and convinced the Pharaoh to store up supplies so that the land of Egypt would not *have* to live in a story of not enough. So, what happened between Joseph's generation and the generation that Moses finds himself dealing with? It would seem reasonable to conclude that the Egyptian people, led by the Pharaohs, simply forgot the goodness and abundance of God. Over the generations they became, once again, mired in the "things of this world". The rains; the crops; fertility; power; did they have the biggest, scariest army on the block so that no one would dare threaten them? And as they kept focusing more and more on what they did or did not have, they forgot about the abundance of the God of Israel who had saved them from famine through *both* Joseph and their own Pharaoh. It was Pharaoh's dream that Joseph interpreted. They forgot that the abundance of the God of Israel was not only for Israel but for Egypt too.

When you live in a story of not enough, work and labor become a foregone conclusion and there is no rest. There is no Sabbath. Because if there is never enough, then you must keep working, laboring, grinding. There is no rest and if you somehow find time to rest, then you must not be doing enough work and more labor is required. This is the situation the Israelites find themselves in in our reading. Moses and Aaron demand that Pharaoh let the Israelites go so that they can go and live in a story of abundance. A downtrodden, subjugated, enslaved people are going to go throw a feast, a giant party, out in the wilderness. With what? When you live in a story of abundance, you party with what you have. But Pharaoh is not living in a story of abundance, he's living in a story of not enough. If the Israelites have enough time to go party and have a feast to YHWH, then clearly, they are not working enough. So he decrees that straw will no longer be provided for them to make bricks but they must now go and get their own straw to make the bricks. That'll teach 'em! There's not enough! More labor, more work. Pharaoh even tells Moses and Aaron to get back to their burdens and labors. Go back where you came from and get back to working. There's not enough ... anything to be worrying about people's freedom from slavery.

After Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples were living in a story of not enough. They had all locked themselves up tight inside their homes for fear of their own lives. They had scattered and disappeared afraid that the death that had come for their rabbi, their teacher, their friend would come searching for them as well. The "certainty" of death really seemed to have gotten into their heads because they were certainly familiar with the story of abundance. They witnessed Jesus feed huge crowds of people on two separate occasions. They witnessed his first sign and wonder as he turned water into the best wine. They witnessed numerous healings; everything ranging from blindness and deafness to leprosy and bleeding that would not stop. They witnessed him raise two people from the dead. And Peter was able to walk out onto the water toward Jesus. I wonder why they struggled to comprehend that the story of abundance that Jesus demonstrated and lived for them and so many others was also applicable to him?

Regardless of the why, they still did not comprehend that the story of abundance extends beyond the grave as well. When Mary discovers the tomb empty she immediately suspects that someone has taken Jesus' body. "Why are you weeping?" the angels ask. Because someone has taken Jesus' body away. In the story of not enough, someone else is in control. Someone else has the power and the authority. Why? Because those someone else's hoard the power and authority. They take and take and take and take some more because they live in the story of not enough. The Roman and Jewish authorities were living in the story of not enough. They were hoarding power and authority. They had convinced people so thoroughly that there was not enough, that all Jesus had done was still not enough to prove to his disciples that the story of abundance was real.

So then, how might one reveal the reality of the story of abundance? If it is not enough to defeat death for others in a couple of isolated incidents, then perhaps the proof of the story of abundance is to defeat death for oneself *and* everyone else thereby verifying the new covenant established at the Last Supper just a few days before. After speaking to the angels Jesus appears to Mary and asks her why she is weeping and still, recognition is lacking. She thinks he is the gardener and that perhaps he moved Jesus' body somewhere. When he finally calls her name, she recognizes him and can now, finally, embrace the story of abundance. Abundant life. Abundant grace. Abundant mercy. Abundant love. There is more than enough to go around. Jesus himself told the disciples, and tells us, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd". You too have been called by name. Called into a life, a story of abundance. You have been called and invited to live into the story of abundance even when the people, the world around you, live a story of not enough. He is Risen. And that is a story of abundance that will never come to an end. Amen.