


## *“God Knew”*

**Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

**15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**#3 in Series: EXODUS: Gods calls, provides, and fulfills**

 **Exodus 14:19-31 (NRSV)**

Today, we focus on what we most associate with The Exodus—the escape from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea.

This is the event we all have in our minds; a vision of the waters parting, the Israelites walking across on dry land, and then the waters engulfing the Egyptian soldiers and drowning them all.

It is an epic story designed to prove Yahweh’s ultimate power over any god another culture might worship.

**[Read from NRSV Bible]**

**This is the Word of God for the people of God.**

***Thanks, be to God.***

**[2<sup>ND</sup> Service: Affirmation of Faith]**

## [MESSAGE]

As we have seen in recent weeks, clouds hold water and presage storms.

A cloud can be the promise of rain and sustenance for the earth or a portend of disaster and destruction.

Clouds can obscure from view the heavens and the workings of God; they can form a barrier through which none can find their way.

A cloud can be a source of joy for children seeking fluffy animal images in the sky.

A cloud can also be a source of fear when it lies low on the horizon or engulfs us in its fog.

This one phenomenon takes many forms and serves many purposes, while all are a creation of God.

**Let us pray...** Lord, your creative action in the world is a mystery to us. Lead us today so that we might better understand our role in your Creation. In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**

The Exodus story is truly a story of “*new creation.*”

Throughout this story, God is active, speaking to the people and saving them from peril.

But, as we see with clouds, God’s creative work can have a dark side.

Beginning requires ending.

At Creation, God’s Spirit (*ruach*), the mighty wind, hovered over the deep. (Genesis 1:2)

God created light in the darkness, divided the waters and assigned them a place.  
(Genesis 1:2-7)

God gathered together the waters and caused dry land to appear and named them “earth” and “seas.” (Genesis 1:9-7)

With the Exodus, God leads the people to freedom and makes light in a dark place.

A mighty wind, or *ruach*, rearranges the sea and makes dry land appear. (Exodus 14:20-21)

For the Israelites, this journey out of slavery into freedom is a new creation.

God's power to create something from nothing, is the same power by which God saves and transforms.

God's creative power reveals a path for the people and provides protection from the chaos and death of the sea.

This power continues to create pathways for salvation and transformation in our world.

God's creative power did not end with the Garden of Eden.

God redeemed and transformed the people with the Great Flood, leaving Noah and his family to begin again.

This beginning required an ending.

God turned Abraham and Sarah's despair into blessing by saving them and transforming their lives to begin a new nation

Another new beginning.

Now we come to the story of Moses and the Exodus; another new beginning.

Time and again, God looked upon the Israelites, and God knew.

God knew what they needed; God knew what they were going through; and then God came up with good news for their bad situation.

### **God knew.**

When asked what the future holds, how often do we respond, “*God only knows!*”?

“*Heaven knows!*” “*Goodness knows!*”

“*God knows!*”

We often intend this response to be somewhat lighthearted, but it may indicate a deeper uncertainty about the future.

As we struggle to live out a life of faith, we have a God who knows us, knows our problems, knows our failings, knows our needs.

We see in this story how God’s activity provides hope for anyone struggling with insurmountable obstacles.

There are two words for “*dry land*” used in this passage.

One is “*yabbáshah*.” It is most-often used to describe the miracle parting of the waters in this story.

It is used in the Creation story to describe God’s action dividing the waters; but, every other use refers to the Exodus story.

The other word is “*charábah*”; means to dry up or be in ruins.

This word does not only distinguish between water and its absence; forms of this word are used to name the waste and desolation that follows warfare, judgment, and destruction.

It’s use here indicates the end of one order of things and the beginning of a new creation.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. talked about this story and what the end and new beginning might represent in his time.

He called this end, “**The Death of Evil upon the Seashore.**”

In 1954, he preached a sermon with that title and called out the evils evident in the world.

They included greed and war, “*high places where [people] are willing to sacrifice truth on the altars of their self-interest,*” and “*imperialistic nations trampling over other nations with the iron fist of oppression.*”

He likened racial desegregation to God’s work of ending and beginning a new order.

He saw the Red Sea open in the U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark decision in *Brown v Board of Education*.

Much has changed – *and stayed the same* – in the 63 years since Rev. King preached that sermon.

Slavery looks like Human Trafficking these days.

Racism looks like “*white nationalism*” and intolerance and urban violence.

Inequality manifests in women's rights, LGBT rights, and immigration reform.

What is the machinery of oppression, domination, exploitation, and new colonialism that must be dismantled so that God's people may all truly be free?

The Israelites were descended from a long line of people accustomed to difficulties in life.

They had been overrun in the past; they had lost everything; they had been enslaved by the Egyptians.

They were living in a world of injustice and oppression they could not control.

Their options are treacherous, even with God's creative power.

The angel of God guides the people as a cloud going before them until their pursuers get close.

Then the cloud moves to stand between them and the Egyptians as a protector.



Now they are faced with the sea before them and their enemies behind them.

Only God's power to make a new way could rescue them now.

Today, many people find themselves on the run like the Israelites.

The bad situations they face are unemployment, family discord, depression, serious illness, doubt, fear, loneliness – there are so many oppressive conditions affecting us.

We live in a world where injustice, oppression, poverty, and hunger are everywhere we look.

Moving from these bad situations to something better is too difficult for us on our own.

Where are our pillars of cloud and fire?

Will the waters part for us so we can pass through unscathed?

How does God's activity in Jesus provide hope and the basis for faith for such people in such situations?

Moses underestimated God.

*“They won’t believe me;” he said, “They won’t believe you.”*

That is a mistake we must not make.

Exodus gives us a clearly defined situation of oppression and how Yahweh met that need.

Our assignment is to articulate the means of grace in ways that intersect with the current plight of real people in real situations all around us.

Then people will believe in God and will trust the word that we deliver.

God has always seen the plight of God’s people and heard their cries for help.

God has always known what was happening and what we needed; **who** we needed.

God worked through Noah and Abraham, and Moses, because God knew what they could not know.

God sent Jesus because God knew who **we** needed and how we could follow his example.

Now, God **sends** us to walk through the dry lands of hopelessness and despair to bring Good News and love.

God sends us because God only knows what we are capable of when we accept the power of God to part the waters that obstruct us from being the free people God intends.

We are here because God knew this is where we need to be.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**