



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Rejoicing in God

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Exodus 13:1-16

Clint Pressley

**13** The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> “Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.”<sup>3</sup> Then Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. <sup>4</sup> Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. <sup>5</sup> And when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month. <sup>6</sup> Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. <sup>7</sup> Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. <sup>8</sup> You shall tell your son on that day, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ <sup>9</sup> And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. <sup>10</sup> You shall therefore keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year.

<sup>11</sup> “When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, <sup>12</sup> you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD's. <sup>13</sup> Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. <sup>14</sup> And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. <sup>15</sup> For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’ <sup>16</sup> It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.”

(Pastor Prays)

I got home last night after traveling all day from El Paso, TX. I posted this on social media. A lot of you know this. You've been praying for me, and I appreciate you praying for me. In El Paso, TX, I've presided over what has to be the most profoundly sad funeral of my 33 years of pastoral ministry as a grieving, devastated mom and dad, and grandparents said goodbye to their two only children, Sebastian and Charlie. You might remember the story. It was a month ago when those two kids, seven and three, were swept away from their parents in the flood in New Mexico, so Friday, I gathered with the family to preach the funeral. On either side of me was a poster of the children: Charlotte on one side and Sebastian on the other. And all of their toys were scattered around on the table in front. In fact, as if to add to the sadness, the family pets, the two German shepherds that they loved so much, were also killed. They were cremated in there. The mom and dad sat right there on the front pew. And in a time like that, there's nothing, there's not a word, not a paragraph, there's not a poem to recite that can assuage that kind of grief. So, I spent almost the entirety of the funeral sermon just quoting the Bible because right here we find the words of life. And as I started the long trip home yesterday, I couldn't get on a plane from El Paso on Friday, so I spent the night. Yesterday morning, I got up early and traveled all day long. When I started the long trip home, I spent the entire day, the whole trip, meditating on this passage. And the more I read it, the lighter and more joyful my soul became.

Join me here in the text. Let me tell you what's happening. The people of God have been liberated from 400 years of slavery. God saved them. He brought them out, the Bible says, with a mighty hand. He brought them out. He did so in something called the Passover. When the Angel of Death came and struck down every firstborn in Egypt, but every home that had the blood of the lamb over its doorpost, the Angel of Death passed over. There comes the template that points us to the New Testament and the Gospel of Jesus, who is our Passover Lamb that even today, we'll take the Lord's Supper after I preach, you are reminded that if you are under the blood of our Passover Lamb, Jesus, the Angel of destruction passes over you.

Exodus is the gospel in the Old Testament. The very word itself refers to the exit, when God exited his people out of Egypt. This picture, as seen in Chapter 13, becomes a template and a principle of the work in the person of Jesus. It is a reminder that we will punctuate today with the Lord's Supper. So, as we study today and as we celebrate today, it is my hope that you will

find your joy in God. I hope that you will center your happiness in God. That you will find your contentment in the absolute goodness of God. Why? Because...

### **God has Made You to Rejoice in Him**

God has made you just like you are, that you might rejoice in him. Now, typically, what I'll do is just go through and point out a couple of things in this passage, but I want to get to all the points this morning, so let me give you a couple of things to look at in the passage. The structure goes like this. In verses one and two, you have the speech from God to Moses. In verse 3, Moses then speaks to the people. In verses one and two, we have the introduction of redemption in the consecrating of the firstborn, and the firstborn is redeemed. That word 'redeem' becomes the pattern for which we understand how God saves his people. Then, in verses 3-11, we delve into a lengthy discourse about the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Why do you have the feast of unleavened bread? Because God brought his people out in a mighty way, and he did so quickly. He did it almost in a way that they were not ready. That's verses 3 to 11. And then in verses 12 to 16, we pick up the theme of redemption again. They are told to teach their children about redemption. This is a way to remind you to rejoice. God has made you to rejoice in him. Let me show a couple of reasons that you should rejoice. Here's the first one, number one.

#### **Rejoice that he makes us holy**

You are not holy. You see it in verse one. We are made holy. What does the text say?

<sup>2</sup> *"Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.* The way they're consecrated is through

redemption. That word, consecrate, means to set apart, to see differently. In fact, this passage right here shows up in the Christmas story. When you open up to Luke Chapter 2, and you're reading the Christmas story, you read about the birth of Jesus. Then you keep reading, and you find that Jesus' mom and dad take him to the temple. They do so to consecrate the firstborn.

Luke, when he tells us the story, he quotes Exodus Chapter 13 to show us that Jesus Christ is the firstborn of all creation. He comes as the second Adam. The first Adam created fell into sin.

The second Adam, Jesus, comes to redeem us from that. He is holy, and we are not; that's a problem, because in order to actually see God, to worship God, to enjoy God, we must be made

holy. But all our efforts are in vain. Many of you sitting here have read the Bible and know what our righteousness is like. It's like filthy rags. It doesn't amount to anything. And yet we are called to be holy.

How then can we be made holy? We need the holiness of another. And the joy of the gospel is that in Christ, God makes us holy through his life and his death and his resurrection. There is a great exchange. In fact, we have a ministry called XChange that is based on the great exchange, which is the exchange at the cross. If you're not a Christian, this is how you become one. This is when we say that at the cross of Jesus, Jesus takes your sin, and there on the cross, that sin is judged. You're guilty, but Jesus takes the guilt, and your sin is punished. And that's not all that happened. He then gives you his righteousness. So, you are made holy because of the righteous life of Jesus. So that you not only have your sins taken away, but you aren't left just as a zero. You are given the righteousness of Christ. You go from being a sinner to being a Saint.

Be careful how you talk now. Sometimes, when you make a mistake or someone accuses you, you might explain it by saying, 'Well, you know, I'm not a saint.' Don't go around saying that. You are a saint, you're just not a very good one. You have been made right because of what Christ has done for you. You ought to rejoice in the fact that he makes us holy. Let's tie another one to that. Let's make it a little more specific. Here's the second thing to rejoice in, number two.

### **Rejoice that he redeems us**

Let me show where I got that in verses 11 through 14. I got stuck on the donkey here. Like, what about that poor donkey? Let me read it to you in verse 13. There's a principle here.

*<sup>13</sup> Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.* It is redemption or death, redemption or condemnation. If you were to look further into the Bible, you will see all of the laws that will show up in Leviticus and following. There you'll see that a donkey is an unclean animal, and in order for that unclean animal to be redeemed, there had to be the blood of a lamb. And if that unclean animal were not redeemed, then it was condemned. There is a principle here that points all the way to every one of us. We approach God as unclean, and if we are to be redeemed, we must be redeemed by the blood of Jesus. And if we are not

redeemed by the blood of Jesus, we are condemned. Every one of us came into this world under the condemnation of judgment that we deserve as sinners. But God, in his goodness, has looked at us in love and promises to redeem anyone who will turn and put their faith in what Christ has done for you on the cross. You have been made different; that redemption is Christ in our place. That means you are loved; you have been ransomed. You have been adopted. Those of you in this room who were not able to have children naturally, and then you adopted a child, that child was not yours biologically. Still, that child became yours legally and had access to everything a biological child would have had.

Back when, we used to say things we shouldn't have. We would say that a child that was born out of wedlock was illegitimate. That's a terrible way to describe a child. But the truth is, God has seen us in our illegitimacy, and he has come and legitimized us. That's what redemption is. That you have been brought into a family. You have been given a name. You belong not only to God's family in heaven, but you also belong to his family on Earth, which is the church. So, rejoice that he makes us holy, rejoice that he redeems us. Let me give you a third thing to rejoice over, number three.

### **Rejoice that he is able**

God is able. If you were singing a song, after each lyric, you would come to the refrain, and the refrain in this song of chapter 13 is that God saved us by his mighty arm. You might see it. If you'd like to mark things in your Bible, you'll see it in verse 3, by the strong hand of the Lord, in verse 9, by the strong hand of the Lord, and in verse 14, by the strong hand of the Lord, who brought us out of Egypt from the house of slavery. And finally, down in verse 16, for by a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt.

Why by a strong hand? You ought to rejoice in the fact that he is able to actually save you. As bad as you are, he's able to forgive the most heinous sin and wash it away. Honestly, I've been thankful that the Lord is able to sustain you, that he is able to actually make you joyful. That God is able to provide. You'll probably have a meal after church. That God is able to actually use you regardless of your past, and maybe because of your past. That God is able to make you useful even when you've been through the worst. If you have been through the worst, he's able to make you content. Do you know that God is able to change you? God changes people. We

were sinners, our appetites were sinful. The things we did were sinful. And when you come to the cross of Jesus in repentance, it is a one-day detox right there. At the cross, he's able to do that. One day, when your eyes close and you breathe your last, God is able to receive you to Himself. Now, let me tell you that some of you have been praying for someone for some time now. We trust and rejoice that God is able to save those who are running from him. We rejoice in that. We rejoice that he makes us holy. We rejoice that he redeems us. We rejoice that he is able; it's the mighty hand of God, the strong arm of God. And here's the fourth thing to rejoice in, number four.

### **Rejoice in the future**

God's people look to the future, and we rejoice. Now, I want to point this out to you because there are many of us in this room who find our joy in the past. I mean, even Facebook has a function that shows you your memories on this day, 10 years ago. You look at that picture, and you look so much better than 10 years ago. We find our joy in nostalgia. And look, if you're over 50, it is an addictive drug. So now it's got to where you can go, and you can put a filter on the camera, and you don't look as bad as you normally do. The filter gets all those lines off you. Or, if you really want to, there's now a cartoon version of yourself that looks really good. Or the artificial intelligence version of yourself is genuinely artificial, and it isn't intelligent. It's addictive to look back at what used to be, or what's even worse, some of you would do this. Sometimes we think about what could have been. Or we look into the future and think about what it should be like right where we are. Why isn't it happening yet?

But you see, when God saves us from something, he saves us to something. So, God saved you from going to hell, he called you as his child, and he didn't just set you on solid ground to have you stand there. He's taking you somewhere. I'm going to show you what I mean. I get that verses 4 and 5. *<sup>4</sup>Today, in the month of Abib, (that is March and April on our calendar) you are going out. <sup>5</sup>And when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month.* I heard Kevin de Young say that that's a Presbyterian for you. You're coming out of slavery. You're going into a land of milk and honey, and the terrible thing is, they'll get over there and still complain. When God pulls his people out of slavery, he's taken them somewhere. The problem is that we want

certainty. Like today, we can track everything. I can track my phone, and I know where my iPad is. There's a little tag that you can put in your wallet, so you know where your wallet is if it gets stolen. You know where the crook is going with your wallet. And now, I get tracked. There's some way on your iPhone to let people know your location, and I've accidentally let everybody know where I am. So, everybody knows where the preacher is that wants to know. We can track every single thing, and in doing so, we think we know things for certain. We think we should know how things should happen. But as a Christian, if you had certainty, you wouldn't need faith. Why would you have to believe it's just there?

Even the apostle Paul says in Phillipians 3:13, <sup>13</sup>*Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

I want you to rejoice in the future, tomorrow. What are you going to do tomorrow? Well, you're going to get up in the morning. You're going to rejoice that you are displaying the glory of God in your life. You're going to get up in the morning and fulfill his will. What is God's will for your life? First Thessalonians 4 is your sanctification. You're going to grow in Christ. Whatever God puts before you tomorrow morning and the next day and next week and next year, you would consider that to be the work that God has given you. You're going to do it to his glory. Every chance you can, you're going to speak the name of Christ, proclaim his name. When things go poorly, as they most certainly will, you will reflect his character. And because you are a Christian, you're a part of the church. Part of God's will for your life is to find a way, using your talents, abilities, time, and the resources God has given you, to build His church. And when you are done, one day, by God's grace, you will join his everlasting Kingdom. So, all of this is to say to you: find a way in your everyday life to have some contentment in honoring God and living for Jesus today. Write it on the mirror. What can I do today? Rejoice in the future. Let me give you another thing to rejoice in. Here's the fifth one, number five.

**Rejoice in his provision**

God has provided; rejoice in God's provision. You'll see this in verses 6-7. Five times in this short passage, you have what is known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Or you might say, the Feast of Flatbread. Go to a restaurant, and they have a flatbread sandwich on the menu. That's a pizza. That's not anything but a pizza. So, here's the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Why is that here? This is why when we take the Lord's Supper, we'll use wafers. It comes from this passage. Why did they celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread once a year? Because when they get into the promised land and forget how good God is, and then start complaining, it's what we do when we get down the road of life: we forget what God has done, and we complain. So, to keep them from complaining, God gave them instructions. You have the Feast of Unleavened Bread once a year, and that is there to remind you that on that Passover night, God took them out so quickly that they didn't have time for sourdough bread. They had that flatbread. So, we are reminded that God does provide. You might even write that somewhere, God will provide. There are some small kindnesses of the Lord that have happened in your life, and you've overlooked them, and you need to go back and say thank you, God, for that. There are some small kindnesses that people have done for you or said to you, places you've been, or things you've received that you just looked over. Some of them are big kindnesses. You have been reconciled or healed. Saved, I mean, that's the ultimate gift. It's what we'll celebrate today with the Lord's Supper. It is the body and the blood of Jesus, his perfect life, his death on the cross in our place, his resurrection.

I just came off a terrible tragedy, seeing and now thinking about that family. They are not feeling like God has blessed them. So, let's say you're in the room here, and for whatever reason, you feel overwhelmed or depressed, or you're just not seeing the blessings. It's just disappointment. Here's what the Lord's Supper is designed to do: it's designed to recenter you. So, for the next few moments, you will think about his life for your own. What was true for the Sons of Israel is true for believers in Jesus Christ. We have been redeemed by the very Son of God, who is the firstborn of the Father. Now look, to redeem us, God offered up His firstborn Son. He offered up his firstborn son not to be redeemed, but to redeem us. So today, you start there at the cross of Jesus, and you stay at the cross of Jesus until your heart is healed, strengthened, and content in Jesus, and you can rejoice in His provision in your life. There are two things I'd like to point out that we can rejoice in. I'll just walk by them quickly.

## **Rejoice in discipleship**

There's the discipleship element right here in the text. You see it in verse 8. It's proactive. Parents, teach your children. That's verse 8. Teach your sons and daughters to know what we do. Or, if you were to go to verse 14, there is a didactic, when your little ones ask you, why are we doing this? You can tell them exactly why we do the things that we do. Also, look at verse 9 and down to verse 16, there you have the word in your hands. You have it between your eyes. It's coming out of your mouth. It means that you know what it is you believe and are growing in depth and knowledge of the Lord. It is to have it ever before us, to rejoice that you are growing as a Christian. Let me give you one last point, and we'll take the Lord's Supper.

## **Rejoice in your testimony**

Your testimony has been personal to you. It's subtle. You see it in verse 8, and you might see it down in verse 15, too, but let me show it to you. In verse eight, look at the personal nature in verse 8. You shall tell your son on that day, it is because of what the Lord did for me. For me. When I came out of Egypt, it's not plural. It's singular. This is what God has done for me. It's a personal testimony. Now, I think this right here is a really good place to end. Thinking of what God has done for you. So, with your heads bowed this morning, join me as we prepare for the Lord's supper. Let's think about what God has done. Do you have a testimony of God saving you? Have you understood and thought on the holiness of God and how you can't approach Him because you are a sinful man or woman? Are you aware of your sin? And yet, you've heard the gospel over and over again; it's the gospel of Jesus. It's that Jesus Christ lived perfectly. He died on the cross in your place. God raised him from the dead, and you can be saved through what Christ has done. And that's the only way you can be saved. And now you believe that you trust that Christ did that for you, and you trust that you can be saved by that and that alone. If that's the case, ask God to save you, and you will have a testimony. Today, we celebrate and remember.

*(Pastor prays)*