

THE
HAND
OF THE
LORD

Daily Devotions

Matthew D. Rosebrock



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ASH WEDNESDAY
AND THE
DAYS FOLLOWING

Fear God, Not Men

Exodus 1

But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. (Exodus 1:17)

Ancient Israel prospered in the land of Egypt because the hand of the Lord was with them. However, the land that had once been a place of refuge with Joseph became a place of bondage. Pharaoh was losing his grip and ordered the killing of Hebrew newborn boys. But Shiphrah and Puah feared God and not Pharaoh, and so let the children live.

Fear of the world is driven by fleeting threats and false promises. But the fear of God is different. As He calls us to live according to His commandments, God brings about holy fear in us through His Law to recognize that He alone is God. Worldly fear can only drive to despair, but holy fear drives toward repentance and faith, which is supplied only by the Gospel—for Jesus has redeemed us by His blood and righteousness on the cross.

Like Shiphrah and Puah, fearing God and not men means that we have no need to let the world dictate our lives by its short-lived rewards and threats (Psalm 56:11; Acts 5:29). We do not even need to let our left hand know what our right hand is doing as we seek to love our neighbors in our vocations (Matthew 6:3). For God is merciful in Christ Jesus by the work of His hand alone.

Lord, preserve us when temptations seek to strike misplaced fear into our hearts. Lead us to fear, love, and trust in You above all things. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Drawn from the Water

Exodus 2:1–10

When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the riverbank. (Exodus 2:3)

After the midwives refused to fear his hand, Pharaoh ordered that all Hebrew newborn male children be cast into the Nile. But with loving hands, Moses' mother refashioned a basket into a floating ark of safety for her young son. Ironically, Pharaoh's own daughter drew Moses from the water. While human hands are at work, the hand of the Lord is at work over this entire situation. Our Lord has a habit of saving through water. He also saved Noah and his family by placing them in an ark, sealing it, and saving them through the deadly waters of the flood.

Though it may look like a mere human hand pouring water upon the head, God's hand is at work in Holy Baptism. He saves us through water and Word as we are united to Jesus' death and resurrection (Romans 6:1–11). For God cleanses us of our sins. Our old sinful self has been drowned in those waters, and we have been drawn from the water into a new life in Christ. Furthermore, the Lord safely places us in the "holy ark of the Christian Church" (*LSB*, p. 269), where we are sealed until the day of Christ's coming.

Dear heavenly Father, thank You for saving us through Holy Baptism. Keep us in Your holy ark, the church, by Your saving hand. In Jesus' name. Amen.

God Remembers the Covenant He Cut

Exodus 2:11–25

And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.
(Exodus 2:24–25)

When Moses witnessed the suffering of his own people at the hands of the Egyptians, he recklessly tried to take matters into his own hands and soon found himself on the run. Still, the Lord was with him, providing for him. Even after the rule of Egypt changed hands, God saw the suffering of His people. He remembered the covenant He had cut with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He was about to enact His plan of rescue by His hand.

Taking matters into our own hands rarely results in what we think it should, much less does it fix the problems of this world. More often, doing so only makes matters worse. When it comes to our salvation, there is nothing that we can do to earn it. It is completely out of our hands. Our only hope is in the one who has all things in His control. God knows the plight of His people and has sent Jesus to be our Savior, who wins for us the forgiveness of sins. His hand alone will see us through the trials of this day in patience and peace as we trust in His promises to save.

Dear Lord, we praise You for taking our salvation into Your own hands to do what we were never able to do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Mighty Hand of the Lord

Exodus 3

So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. (Exodus 3:20)

Pharaoh's death grip on God's people was tight, and he would respond only to a mighty hand. Israel was unable to free themselves from his grip, but God's mighty hand can do what no mere human can. For not only will Israel be set free, but also Egypt will hand over their gold and silver as they leave.

We all would be lost in captivity to the devil were it up to the strength of our own hands. Jesus says that the devil is like a strong man who seeks to hold us captive by his strength. However, when Christ came, He cast out demons, signaling that He has come to bind the strong man. He has come as the mighty hand of God to free us from bondage. Christ has plundered the devil's house (Matthew 12:29). Jesus has conquered the devil in order to win us and bring us under His gracious reign. He alone is the mighty hand of God, who fights for us and frees us to live under His reign.

Dear heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to be the mighty hand of God to bind the devil, plunder his house, and bring us to live under Your kingdom forever. In Jesus' name. Amen.