

Deuteronomy 5:1-21; 6:4-9

Oct 11, 2015

Grace and peace to you from God our father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Why did grandma cut off the ends of her Easter ham?

Last week's story was from Exodus starting in chapter 1. A new king arose in Egypt who did not know Joseph.

This brings to mind several questions

Why didn't the new king know him? How long had Joseph been dead before the new king arose? What was Israel doing in Egypt and how long had they been there? It's not like the king woke up one day and there were thousands of new people in town. Was he taught some kind of revisionist history or did he skip that class in king school?

The bible doesn't clearly answer all of these or other questions about the new king, but we do know he did not know Joseph. What makes the most sense as to why, is that no one told him the stories of Joseph. It does make sense that an Egyptian would not sit around the campfire listening to stories of the Israelites, but Joseph was also important to the Egyptians, so I would have thought the stories of how he helped prepare Egypt for the upcoming famine would be important around Egyptian tables as well.

The problem with not sharing the stories of our past is not just that we lose our history, but we also lose our future. If we stop telling the stories of our family today who will be telling them in the future? And without knowing the stories of our past we forget the lessons learned from our ancestor's mistakes and we are doomed to repeat them in the future. I would rather learn from the mistakes of my elders than to suffer through the pain of making them myself.

But for now we move on in the story. Last week we left Moses at the burning bush. Since then he traveled back to Egypt to have a chat with Pharaoh. It did not go so well in the beginning but after many requests, and 10 nasty plagues, the Israelites were finally able to leave Egypt.

They crossed on dry land through the Red Sea, drank water from rocks, ate manna from heaven and made their way to Mt. Sinai, where they received the first copy of the 10 Commandments. Moses was on the mountain with God for a long time and the people below seemed to forget the wondrous things God had done for them so they threw a party with a golden calf.

This made God and Moses quite displeased with the people. Moses broke all 10 C at once by throwing the tablets on the ground and God sentenced them to 40 years of wandering around the wilderness. On the positive side Moses did convince God not to wipe out the entire

population and start over with other people, and so with a fresh copy of the 10 C they started their wandering.

And now we arrive at today's story. Deuteronomy is basically Moses farewell speech before he dies and the people finally enter the promise land. He is once again reminding them of all God has done for them, restating the 10 C's, again...and instructing them to teach them to their family.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Moses created cross generational ministry.

This is a prayer called the Shema. It is sometimes called the greatest commandment. It is the core of Jewish faith formation. Jesus quoted the Shema in Mark 12, Matthew 22, and Luke 10. It is still repeated twice a day by faithful Jews.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Tell your children the stories of our faith. Tell them the stories of our ancestors. Tell them the stories of what God has done for us and through us. Tell them why we do what we do so they will know who the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is. So they will know who Joseph is. So they know who Jesus is how much he loves them. So they will know of his unconditional love, grace, and forgiveness for all people. So they will know why grandma cuts the ends off the ham.

It is also my theme verse for how and why I do ministry. I want to equip, empower, and encourage you to tell the stories of our God to your families, to your friends and neighbors. It is why we provide bulletin inserts, book marks with the lectionary, and bookmarks with instructions for Faith5. It is why we are doing more cross gen activities on Sunday mornings and recruiting more story tellers.

Telling stories is important and can be great fun, the stories we know the best and are important to us are the ones we share the most.

At family gatherings we tell stories of past events...over and over.

The time my brother laughed so hard he shot milk out his nose

When mom shot 10/10 clay pigeons... We didn't take her skeet shooting anymore.

When we met our spouse.

When our children were born

When our children grow up, get married, and have children of their own.

When our loved ones die.

These are the stories of family we share with each other.

The Shema reminds us to share the stories of our faith community. At all times and in all places, when we are at home and away, when we rise up and when we lie down, so that we will remember and prosper in the lives God has given to us.

We remember and share God's story at home.

The time when God created the heavens and the earth,

When Noah built an ark.

When Jacob wrestled with God.

When Moses saw the burning bush.

When King David killed Goliath, and even when he took Bathsheba when he should not have.

When God's son was born, how he lived, died, and rose again.

When the Apostle Paul traveled to different towns to tell the stories of Jesus.

These are the stories of our faith community we share with our friends and family.

And speaking of traveling to different towns, I would like to tell you some stories of my own travels.

Cheryl and I traveled the country talking with youth ministry professionals, musicians, pastors, and professors. We talked about community, working together, faith formation, disc golf, quilting, youth and family ministry, and yes...beer.

In the mid-west confirmation is still a really big thing. It's just what you do, there is no other option. So they have large numbers of 6-9th graders in their churches. Some churches require parents to be involved in the confirmation process – a great idea in my opinion – teach these things to your children. We normally hear of youth dropping out of church after confirmation but in West Fargo it is the parents who stop showing up. They were in attendance because they were following the law, but sadly their attendance did not translate to changed lives.

A church in Bismarck has two pastors. One in charge of adults, the other in charge of youth and there is very rarely any cross generational events. I asked the youth pastor what he expected for his three daughters as they grew up in the church. He said as long as they have fun in youth group they will come back and learn something later in life. Cheryl told him he had set the bar pretty low because one problem with his attitude is that research shows that kids who just have fun in youth group don't attend church as adults. If the wisdom of the elders are not shared with the wonder of the child, if the stories are not told to the children we will raise a generation of people who do not know Joseph.

I spoke with Dr. Rich Melheim, the creator of curriculum used in many churches around the country. He said the future of faith formation will not be found in a program or in a curriculum, but in relationships. Scary words for a man who makes his living selling programs and curriculums. He said the best thing we can do for people is to give them to each other and get out of the way. That is the core of Faith 5, you might have heard us mention it a time or two. It is part of what we are now doing every Sunday at 10am. Sharing highs and lows with each other so we can build relationships and pray for one another. Faith 5 is not rocket science, but there is plenty of science to support it. Very simple really: share, read, talk, pray, bless. Every night in every home.

Some friends of mine at a church in Renton are changing their Sunday morning schedule. Last year they had Sunday school during one of their two worship services. There was no adult class during Sunday school so the parents would drop their kids in class and go to worship. In this schedule many children were not getting a chance to worship with the whole community and the adults were not given a time for learning and conversation. When do children learn the rhythms of worship? When do adults learn to worship with children? This fall they expanded their schedule and put an education hour in between the services and added an adult class. Following our example they will also be experimenting with GIFT Sundays.

These are just a few of the stories from our travels. I sent you some others from the road and I will be sharing more in the future, but for now.

Hear, O Poulso, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Amen.