

Life Interrupted**Exodus 2: 1-10**

So, as the old saying goes, when you're handed a bag of lemons, make lemonade. In other words, find the positive in the midst of the negative.

Easier said than done, believe me. My personality tends toward the opposite. I prefer to bob lemons rather than make lemonade.

But what constitutes a lemon?

Well, for me personally, it's being thrown off my game, my routine. It's being interrupted. I don't know about you, but if I'm in a zone, the last thing I want or need is an interruption.

Say for example your mind finally settles down so you can concentrate on that report your boss has been hounding you about, but just as you begin, the phone rings. It's the school calling to tell you that little Johnny's come down with a fever. Please come and pick him up.

Maybe you woke up with a backache, a toothache, or a sore throat this morning. Even minor things like this can throw off my game. Truth be told, it doesn't take much to waylay me. When I'm thrown off course or my routine is hindered, I'm pretty much useless for the rest of the day.

Maybe you're all set to start that home remodel project you've been dreaming about and planning for over a year. You've got the contractor lined up, the cabinets picked out, and the appliances moved. Then wham, an epidemic hits and you're stuck at home with no sink, no running water, and worse yet, no work crew to finish the job.

I suppose we could just chalk up all these examples of unexpected inconveniences to life itself. Some would even say (annoyingly I might add) that interruptions are the essence of life. What are those two famous words on the bumper sticker? **Life Happens**. In other words, expect the unexpected.

Well, expected or not, our challenge as followers of God remains the same: Deal positively with life's twists, turns, and interruptions by seeing them for what they truly are: God's invitations to us.

Invitations to what you ask?

In my view, we're invited by God to do at least four things:

- 1 To go deeper with Him – to interact with Him on a more personal level, to know him more
- 2 To learn from him and to learn about his ways
- 3 To work with Him
- 4 To worship Him

I think this principle is demonstrated in the life of Moses as recorded in the early chapters of Exodus. Let's take a closer look.

I think we can all agree that Moses' life was severely challenged from the get-go, and that his very existence was hanging in the balance. Let's face it, the odds of Moses reaching the ripe old age of 2 years old were heavily stacked against him.

He was a Jewish infant boy born into Pharaoh's kingdom, a kingdom that had put in place the horrific policy of infanticide for all males born to Jewish parents. Exodus 1:22: *"Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: 'Every boy that is born, you must throw into the Nile but let every girl live.'"*

At first glance, we are startled by how quickly the tables have turned on the Jewish people. It didn't seem that long ago that Pharaoh made Joseph the second most powerful person in the land, and all of Joseph's family were invited to live in the land of Goshen. But over 200 years had passed since Joseph's death – enough time to elapse for parents, grandparents and other powers that be to forget about history and what got them there in the first place.

Remind you of another place?

So now that Joseph and all his brothers have passed on, the Jewish people have lost their privileged status - at least in the eyes of their host country.

Now viewed as Egypt's greatest existential threat, they are treated as such. Exodus 1:11, 13 & 14: *"So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields."*

All this was done by a powerful government who desperately wanted to protect its power, its rule and its way of life.

But the best laid plans of man and governments are no match for God.

Recall Psalmist's description of God's response to those who try to oppose his will: *"The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, 'I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.'"*

Today, you may think that society is against you

or that the government is out to get you,

that your health insurance company is ready to pull a fast one on you

or that your place of employment stands ready to throw you to the curb so it can replace you with a younger, cheaper version of yourself.

And yes, I hear you teenagers: Even your parents seem unwilling to give you a fair shake at times.

Whatever or whoever you think is opposing you – and they very well could be- remember this: God will not oppose those who humbly look to him for strength, guidance and hope.

In fact, the Bible assures us that if we seek to live by God's precepts of love, mercy and faith, we'll receive His abundant gift of grace. Solomon writes in Proverbs 3:34 that God *"gives grace to the humble."*

Does this mean that all the obstacles that seek to derail our lives on a regular basis will simply melt away when we choose to follow God?

Hardly. Don't make me laugh!

But it does mean that He will give us exactly what we need to persevere through them, coming out on the other side looking more like his Son.

And this is, after all, God's plan for each of us who have chosen to call on his name by faith. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son."*

But this is the world into which Moses was born - a world that segregates people according to race, gender, and social status.

A world that thinks it can determine our earthly value before we're even born

a world that's quick to label you and me as an enemy of the state if there's even the remotest possibility that we might try to subvert the powers that be.

And if we fall into even one of these categories that doesn't fit the approved criteria, then our future may look as bleak as Moses' - no better than crocodile food.

How would Moses possibly survive?

The answer to this question is but one: God's intervention.

It was God who gave to Moses's mom and sister the skill, creativity, and faith to design and execute a plan that seemed wildly outrageous and extremely risky - one that if it worked would not only give Moses new life but have him cared for by the royal family of Egypt and reared under the watchful eye of Pharaoh himself!

But if their plan failed, it would emotionally scar a family forever.

Only God could have pulled off such a miracle and the great news is that He's been doing this sort of stuff since the beginning, with the greatest miracle of all being his own Son's incarnation - Jesus coming to earth, becoming man, and rescuing us from our sins, and rising again to secure our place in heaven.

John writes in his gospel, *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father full of grace and truth."*

This is the same God who invites us to get to know him and to commune with Him: *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me."* Revelation 3:20

But are we prepared to sit down and have dinner face to face with God?

This invitation seems strange to us. What does He mean by eating with us? And what would God eat?

At one point, Jesus told his disciples that his favorite meal was doing the will of his Father. So obviously our Savior is using an analogy of some kind, but whatever the meaning, it's clear that he has more in mind than just caloric intake.

It's preparing the meal, sharing the food, helping with the clean-up, and everything else in between.

It's the give and take and the conversation that transpires reminding us that spending time with someone else is both a joy and a sacrifice of love.

This eating and drinking scenario symbolizes an ongoing relationship that brings nourishment to our souls and introduces to us the things that make life worth living.

This is the invitation God makes to us and he's not above interrupting our lives in hopes that we'll respond.

Remember the parable of the great banquet?

Jesus taught that a certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests, and when the time of the big event finally arrived, he sent his servant out to tell those he had invited that everything was now ready.

But very few responded. They all came up with all sorts of different excuses for not coming.

One was busy with real estate

another was overseeing his commercial enterprise

and still another wouldn't even consider bringing his new wife to this fancy soiree!

God interrupts the daily activities of peoples' lives all the time, but very few of us ever see it for what it is – a golden opportunity to draw near to our Master and to get to know him better.

Miriam, Moses' sister knew, and so did her mother.

The Apostle Paul knew. He was interrupted while on an important mission to Damascus when the Lord crashed his party and struck him down with blindness.

What will it take for us to respond?

Job loss?

Corona virus?

Broken relationship?

A lengthy hospital stay?

A terminal disease?

A close call on the freeway?

A natural disaster?

God loves each of us too much to let us wander away without giving us a chance to respond to him and his love. Recall 1 John 4:10: *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."*

Second, God interrupts our lives in order to not only invite us to know him, but also to learn his ways.

I return to Moses' life. He's a full-grown man now and desires to do what's right in the eyes of the Lord. Even though he's been raised in the Pharaoh's palace he hasn't forgotten his Jewish heritage.

So, one day, while he's going about his business, he witnesses terrible cruelty directed toward his people at the hands of an Egyptian. My guess is that this is not the first time Moses has witnessed this sort of ill-treatment. In fact, I'd say he's seen so much injustice toward his people that this latest incident only serves as the final straw.

He can no longer contain his righteous anger. His blood boils over with rage and before he knows it, he has committed the unthinkable. He murders the Egyptian and then attempts to cover up his crime.

Granted, Moses is still a few decades away from descending Mount Sinai with the task of delivering the Ten Commandments that include God's specific order to not murder, but deep down he already knows he's in big trouble with God and Pharaoh. Moses flees into the wilderness in hopes of saving his own life.

Now did God cause Moses to kill the Egyptian?

Never in a million years! But God did use this tragic situation to move Moses to the next stage of his life – to move Moses out of his comfortable, privileged lifestyle and bring him to a place where he'd be receptive to God's ways and to let go of the ways of the world.

Because isn't this exactly what Moses was trying to do back there?

Hadn't Moses witnessed a very serious problem?

Weren't God's people being treated terribly?

Didn't somebody have to do something about it?

Moses wanted to do something about it.

He wanted to solve the problem.

He wanted to make things right.

He wanted to protect the weak and the vulnerable and correct the situation, so he took matters into his own hands and did the only thing he thought he could do.

He used human force and violence to make things right.

Can we blame him?

He was only trying to mete out justice!

He was sticking up for the weak and the vulnerable.

There was no human resources department to file a complaint about a hostile work environment.

There were no police officers, judges, or court rooms for the Jewish person to plead his case.

Moses took it upon himself to be judge and jury and savior.

And in doing so, he wound up in the wilderness, alone, and running for his life.

Solomon, considered to be the wisest man who ever lived wrote in Proverbs 14:12: *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end leads to death."*

The middle eastern desert to which Moses fled meant death.

The wilderness meant death.

Throughout ancient times people would go to the desert for basically one reason.

They would go to this harsh and hostile environment to repent – to throw themselves upon the mercy of God. Repentance means turning away from the ways of the world and turning toward God's holy and righteous ways.

As one author put it, "The desert, as a general idea, matters because it represents trials and spiritual strife – but more than that, the desert of Sinai matters because the Jews encountered God there; the desert of Judea matters because Jesus was tempted there; the desert of Egypt matters because St. Anthony battled and conquered his personal demons there." Maybe St. Anthony had been studying the life of Moses because Moses was taking along his personal demons to the desert.

Whatever the case, Moses' life was severely interrupted – and he was only doing what he thought was right!

But life's interruptions are God's invitations.

Not that God caused the interruption, but He allowed it to happen so that Moses could accept God's personal invitation – not just to be Israel's leader 40 years down the road – this was extremely important, but secondary.

More importantly, was God's invitation to Moses to learn about Him and His ways – to learn the truth that God's ways are not man's ways.

God says through the prophet Isaiah, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

Jesus said that unless the kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it will not produce a crop.

Maybe Moses had to die to the thought that he knew how best to save his people – that he could be their savior. He had to come to the truth that only God can save.

What about us?

Who will save us?

Not just from the next global plague or old age or diabetes, but from things like purposelessness, meaninglessness, confusion, depression, brokenness, insecurity, fear, envy, jealousy, hatred and all the other things that sever and spoil our relationship with God.

Who will ultimately save us from our sins and death?

Only God through Jesus Christ can save.

God interrupts our lives to invite us into a new life with Him so that we can know him deeper and more personally, so that we can learn from him and live according to his ways.

Revelation 7: 9-10: "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"

If you listen closely, you'll be able to hear them – that is, if you don't mind getting interrupted.