

Title: What are you doing here?  
Text: Exodus 6.14 – 7.13  
Theme: God's ways are not our ways  
Series: Exodus #9  
Prop Stmtnt God does the unbelievable by using the unlikely.

## Read Text

This week Barak Obama made a campaign stop just down the street. At events like this, certain groups are given privileged and personal access to be able to shake hands with, and get a picture taken with the celebrity. There is something personally intoxicating to some about being able to say of someone who is famous, "I saw them in person." "I shook his hand." "I've got their autograph." Some how we think others will believe that we are more important or have more worth if we are able to be close to important people.

In our study of the book of Exodus we left off with Moses (80) and Aaron (83) standing before the most powerful ruler of the ANE demanding that the Pharaoh release the people of Israel from their slavery in Egypt. But instead of looking for a photo-op so they can update their face-book page, Moses and Aaron were no doubt wishing that they could be anywhere but there. Up until now, Pharaoh is pitching a no-hitter and Moses and Aaron cannot even seem to be able to find a bat. The scene is pathetic. Like an under-classed boxer going back into the ring for the final blow that will end the fight, his career and perhaps his life, we watch these two men obedient to a God who has not rescued them at all, go back to being exposed again to what we assume to be humiliation at best, but more than likely, more punishment, more pain, and more disaster.

What are the odds of success? Humanly speaking, they are very little. But, I think that really is the point that God wants to permanently embed into our thinking. I say that, partly based on what appears to be an unusual addition to the narrative. Back in chapter 6 (vs. 14-25) we have a genealogy. Now, we are somewhat used to genealogies in the Bible. The book of Genesis is organized by them and actually uses the phrase, "now this is the account of" to carry out the author's supporting points to his main idea. The book of Exodus begins with a limited genealogy of the sons of Israel (Jacob), and of course the book of Numbers receives its title from the many listings of the tribes and other details pertaining to that. Ruth has a one and Chronicles is packed with genealogies. Ezra has them and so does Nehemiah, two post-exilic books. So, it is not that surprising to see Matthew's gospel begin with a genealogy and Luke's gospel include one in chapter 3. However, in spite of the fact that genealogies frequently appear, particularly in the OT, they do not randomly sprout up in the text like dandelions in my yard. There is always an intent, a purpose, a reason, a greater message, as you will. But, this genealogy seems a bit, well, out of the ordinary. (slide)

For one, it only includes the first three sons of Jacob (Israel).

Secondly, it follows the line of Levi more than the rest.

Thirdly, it traces Levi, through Aaron's line, although it does mention Moses.

Fourth, it stops with Phinehas.

(small slide) Clearly, the focus of this record is to draw our attention to the line from Levi to Phinehas, with Aaron, right in the middle. That is obvious; but, why? Let's start with the end. Phinehas is the grandson of Aaron. During the 40 years of wandering, he is one of the young men who stands as an incredibly bright testimony. He is righteously jealous for the honor of God. During one of the dark moments in those days, Phinehas single-handedly turned away the anger of God from the entire nation, by killing an Israelite and a Midianite who were publicly flaunting their rebellion against God. This young man's willingness to act in the defense of the reputation of God and His people resulted in God making a covenant of peace with him. The story of that is recorded in Numbers 25, where God promises Phinehas "a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites." (v.13) Does Moses include this genealogy here in chapter 6 because he wants to show that God established a covenant with Aaron's line? I think that is a factor because of how Moses concludes this with Phinehas. But, I think there is more to it.

So, let's look at how it begins. Is there anything that you see that is unusual? The record only includes 3 of the 12 sons. (slide) What about the other 9? I think the point that Moses is making here, (after all he is writing about his own family tree) is that these two guys, Moses and Aaron, are not from the tribe that you would expect. Which boy receives all the attention? Which boy receives the birthright? Which boy receives the double-inheritance? It's the firstborn! Where would you naturally expect the deliverer to come from? Reuben! But God does not always do things naturally, he does them supernaturally.

So, what about Reuben? Reuben's boys are mentioned, but that's it. Nothing more is said. The same thing is true about Simeon. His six sons are mentioned, but the record then stops. Now, there are other genealogies that follow the line of Reuben and Simeon, but at the end of Deuteronomy when Moses records his song of blessing, Reuben barely receives a line, and Simeon is not even mentioned. Then comes the third in line; Levi. But it is more than that. Look at these three guys. Go back in the biblical record and you find out that these three guys are dirt-bags. Reuben committed incest and Simeon and Levi were guilty of the sin of revenge that resulted in a terrible slaughter of human life. All three guys inherited a curse. Reuben lost his birthright as the firstborn. Simeon's land ended up being in the middle of Judah's and eventually, Simeon's tribe was essentially absorbed into what became the southern kingdom and the identity of that tribe was lost. Levi was not given any land of her own. But, here is the difference. In spite of the fact that Levi was cursed, some of the descendents of Levi turned that curse into a blessing. Phinehas is a prime example of that. Because Phinehas obeyed God in such a dramatic way, God established the line of priests through him. The tribe of Levi became known as the tribe of the priests. The Levi's never had their own land as a tribe because they were given the task of living throughout all the tribes so they could teach the people the Word of God, and be free from the responsibilities of farming and livestock so they could serve in the tabernacle. Yet, you would have never known that from Levi. The same thing ends up being true about the tribe of Judah. Judah was a real piece of work as well. He wanted his twice widowed, daughter-in-law, executed for prostitution, until it was revealed that he was the one who had relations with her. Yet, Christ is known as the Lion from the tribe of Judah. Judah and Levi are two of many examples in Scripture of

how a family starts out like a train-wreck, yet one of the family members takes to God with all of his heart, soul and mind and changes the course of the entire family. I think that is the point of this text. Look at what comes before (v.13). Look at what comes at the end (v.26-27). Look at 7.6. Obviously, Moses wrote these words sometime after the actual Exodus itself and it appears to me as I read the text that even he is somewhat amazed at this scene. Perhaps as he relived this scene in the recording of it, he was wondering, "What was I thinking?"

There are so many human things that are wrong with this picture. There are so many things that are bound to go wrong. There are so many circumstantial reasons as to why Moses and Aaron should not be standing right there in front of this man making this demand. But here they are. At so many levels, this text is showing us that history is His story. Aaron, and Moses what are you doing here, standing in front of Pharaoh demanding the release of the nation of Israel? Are you out of your mind? There is nothing in their family line that would give them any right to be standing there. In fact, there are a bunch of skeletons in their family closet that would give them all sorts of reasons as to why they shouldn't be standing there. But, in spite of all of those skeletons, here they are. I believe that all of this supports the point of this particular text which is part of the bigger picture, which is this: God picks the unlikely to do the unimaginable so that He receives all the glory.

1. **God picks the Unlikely**...(6.14-29)

Think with me for a minute. What leadership skills did Moses have? The guy couldn't talk very well. He lived in the desert for forty years and had to be dragged kicking and screaming back to do this job. He is 80 years old, for crying out loud. Since he can't speak too well, let's get his OLDER brother Aaron to help him out. These guys couldn't fight their way out of a wet paper bag.

But it all fits so well. What nation did God pick to represent Him on this earth? If we were doing the picking, the people of Israel would certainly be close to the bottom of our list. They were poor, illiterate slaves!

Now, some of you are already starting to connect the dots. We could go back and see a man who is childless being told that he had been chosen to be the father of many nations! We could run back and see Joseph rotting in an Egyptian prison, who, in a matter of days, is raised to be second in command of an empire. We could run ahead to David, and acknowledge that while the family and even a nation saw a little boy, God saw a king. We could speak of the prophets, Nahum, Amos, Elijah and Elisha who were puny to the world, but mighty before God. Mary and Joseph had nothing that you could observe that would lead you to believe that God would chose them as the earthly parents of His Son. But, the pattern continues. Christ chooses a tax-collector to be one of his disciples and along with him some fisherman. These two and three time losers, and hot-headed illiterates probably couldn't even get a loan at the local bank. Yet, 2,000 years later, we name our sons Peter, James, John, and Matthew. God loves to pick the unlikely.

Most of you internally question your own person. You have fundamental doubts about your abilities. You fear that you cannot do what you are called to do. There are jobs before you that you don't think you can do. You are terrified about a job interview. You are threatened by this class that you have to take in order to graduate. Deeper than that, some of you are new parents and you are looking at these little children, or this little child scared to death to realize that you have to raise this child and this little child is looking at you assuming that you have some clue as to what you are doing. There is a co-worker who desperately needs to hear about Christ, and internally you know that you are one who needs to do it, but you don't think you can. Your prayer is, GOD, Send someone else!! But he doesn't, he has sent you. You are the most unlikely person for this job.

Some of you know the secret shame that incest can bring upon a family. Some of you know the internal wars, fault-finding and finger-pointing that a suicide can generate within relationships. Some of you know right now the enormous emotional gouge that alcohol and drug bondage can take right out of a family. You live with some of those scars. You wonder what would it be like to have a "normal" family. I really don't think there is such a thing as a normal family. Sure, we all smile for the family portraits and dress up for the weddings and graduations, but behind the smiles every family has its stories. And yet, in spite of all of that, God calls you to follow Him. God calls you to carry out a mission for Him. God calls you to represent Him before others and to speak His words and to lead others out of bondage, and though you see Him pointing at you and you hear him calling you, you really wish it were someone else, because you really don't feel qualified.

Not only that, God asks the unimaginable.

## 2. **To do the Unimaginable**...(7.8-12)

"Bring the Israelites out of Egypt." "Bring the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions." He might as well have told Moses to crack the DNA code, split the atom and raise the dead while he was at it. Humanly speaking, there is nothing at all that makes any sense whatsoever to this request.

But what God calls you to do; He equips you for the calling. (read vs. 8-9) Now, hold the phone for a second. Did you catch that? "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a miracle...'" God knew exactly what Pharaoh was going to say. God knew exactly what was going to happen. God did not tell Moses and Aaron everything, but he did tell them what they needed to know for the next step. Not only that, but God told them how to respond. He is going to ask for a miracle, so give him one. Throw down your staff and it will become a snake. Pharaoh did indeed call for a miracle, and they performed one. By the way, the word for snake in this text is a different word than Moses used back in 4.3. At the burning bush, the snake was probably a smaller, dangerous poisonous type. The word used here means something that is larger and more imposing in appearance.

Interestingly enough, Pharaoh calls for his wise men, sorcerers and magicians to do the same thing, which they do. Now, press pause for just a minute. God did not tell Moses and Aaron that this was going to happen, did He? Just when they thought that they had

finally made an impression on Pharaoh, when for the first time something major had gone right, they are once again made to look like fools. But, if you do what God calls you to do, He will take care of the rest. By the way, it is obvious that not all miracles are directly from God, are they? So, now, Moses and Aaron find themselves in a snake pit, and just at the time when it looks like the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse is going to be just like the 1<sup>st</sup> only a little bit louder and little bit worse, something happens that probably surprised even Moses and Aaron. Aaron's snake swallowed up the magicians and sorcerers snakes, which means that a number of men lost their perceived weapons of power. Did you just see what happened? Pharaoh and his men had position, influence and power. And while all of that is to be taken into consideration, there is no position, no influence and no power that can stand before God. When God calls you to do something, hell itself cannot stand in your way.

I really, really want you to grasp this. While we can learn a great deal about leadership and history from this book, the story of Exodus is ultimately about God calling a people out of bondage to worship Him and enjoy Him living amongst them. In order to worship Him and enjoy Him, you have to know, you really have to know that there is no God like our God. There is no other God. He has no rival, no competition, no equal, and no threat. That day, before Pharaoh, when Aaron threw down that rod, it became a snake. If you have ever seen some of the many remains that have been taken out of the Pyramids from that era, you already know that the cobra was a prominent feature in the headdress of the Pharaoh. When Aaron's snake ate the others, God was making it abundantly clear that the battle is over. Pharaoh's power is busted. The snake has been killed. It is now time, to give up. Did the magicians see it? Did the sorcerers realize what had just taken place? Did Moses and Aaron know the significance of that event? I think so, because from that point on, Moses never again complains about having to face Pharaoh. In one moment, the tide turned. In one moment, the battle was done. The rest, the plagues, the leaving of the country, the Red Sea were just details. The battle was already over. God had come. God was doing exactly what He said He would do. How would Pharaoh respond? If you are looking for a sign as a reason to believe; if you are really looking for a miracle as evidence of authority and the mascot of your empire has just been swallowed up, then I think it is time to wave the white flag. The snake has been swallowed. There are cracks in the floor, the walls are beginning to crumble, the empire, the long, glorious, historical, powerful, impressive Egyptian empire is coming down. Pharaoh refused to believe it (v.13). Most are like that.

That day, Moses and Aaron witnessed the changing of the guard. But step back with me again and you see that God picks the unlikely, to do the unimaginable so that He receives all the glory.

### 3. **So that He receives all the glory.**

What did Moses and Aaron do? Was it the impressive speech delivered with authority and gravitas that carried the moment? Was it Aaron's incantations, smoke and fire and other displays of magic? No, Aaron threw his staff on the floor and then they both stood there and watched God work through a piece of wood. God did this in a way that no man could take the credit. Go back to verses 3-5 (chap. 7) God says, "I will, I will" so that

“the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.” God does not use impressive speakers. God does not need high-profile leaders or high-powered athletes. He uses 80 year old men if they will do what He tells them to. And He will use you. It may not be to lead a nation, but it may be to lead your family. It may be to speak to your neighbor, to pray with or for a co-worker, or to talk to that angry kid who seems so distant from everyone else. You have no idea what God is going to do, but you trust that He will. The message of the gospel and the ministry of this church, which is built on that message, is not a message that has to have smoke, flash and pyrotechnics. We do not need impressive preachers, just faithful preaching. I am reminded of that week after week as I study and prepare to preach. I cannot raise the dead. I cannot reach your heart. I cannot make you believe. If I lived with the pressure of having to make you believe and having to make you change, I would be either crazy, or a major control freak. Spurgeon likened it unto trying to convince a Tiger to be a vegetarian. And yet, God, in His plan, uses the preaching of His Word as the means to awaken the spiritually dead to life and calls us through the preaching of the gospel to follow Christ.

#### 4. **He still does that.**

God still uses unlikely people, like you, to do unimaginable things, like witness, pray, forgive, hope, love, in ways that only He receives the credit. You are the unlikely person.

What does this have to do with Christ?

On the morning of the third day, following his death, there was a little earthquake. It was not a 7.9 like the one in China this week, just enough to loosen a large stone, and wake up a couple of sleepy soldiers. No buildings were flattened that we know of, no one was killed, but in fact, one person was raised back to life. In many ways, the event that took place that day in Pharaoh's palace is very similar to the resurrection of Christ.

Circumstantially, nothing seemed to change immediately, but cosmically and really, it changed everything. The empires of this world are coming down. The cataclysmic events that the book of Revelation speaks of, the breaking of the seals, the pouring out of the bowls, the trumpet blasts of judgment that bring earthquakes and war, and all sorts of natural and supernatural disasters are just the details. Do you understand the war is already over. Christ has won. And just as Moses and Aaron could walk out of the palace that day knowing that no matter what, this battle had already been decided, so can you. Christ has already won.