

Sunday September 28, 2025
At FGBC
Rescued Series
30 minutes

Consider Yourself Warned

- Have you ever received a warning before?
 - o Do this, or else...
 - o Don't do that, or else...

INTERACTIVE QUESTIONS

- Groups of 3 or 4
 - o 1) Introduce yourself
 - o 2) Tell your group about a time that ignored a warning and paid the price or a time that you obeyed a warning and avoided trouble.
 - o 3) How do you determine whether a warning is worth listening to or not?
- Warnings are everywhere...some are simple, while others can be pretty serious.
 - o One of my favourite warning stories comes from one of my high school teachers.
 - One time he was making a late night trip to Winnipeg, which is a 5 hour trip past a lot of small towns and farmland.
 - When making such a trip, it is easy for a person to speed...straight roads, very few curves, and slowly your foot just starts to get a little bit heavier.
 - o This teacher got pulled over about 2 hours into his trip, and was let off with a conditional warning...drive slowly the rest of the trip, or else.
 - He had two options in that moment:
 - Drive slowly as the officer advised.
 - Or continue to drive how he wanted.
 - o He chose to heed the warning and he goes on to tell that the rest of the trip he saw no less than a dozen cop cars waiting on the side of the road, almost as if they were waiting for a high school teacher to speed.
 - o Growing up, one of the warnings for me was watch what you say or you are going to get your mouth washed out with soap.

- One time I said something...no clue what it was...but I got to taste that soap.
 - It was definitely not a pleasant experience...kind of like Thrills gum, without the pleasure of gum to chew on.
 - Every single one of us can listen to the warnings that we are given, or we can ignore them...the choice is ours.
- Today we are looking at Exodus 11, which lays out the final of the plagues that affect Egypt.
 - We need to start at the end of the passage though, which is a reminder of what has already happened.

READ EXODUS 11:9-10

- Let's back up a little bit here.
 - Back in chapters 3 and 4, God calls Moses to be the leader of the Israelites.
 - How does Moses respond?
 - Moses – “What if they don't believe me when I say something?”
 - God – “I'll give you some signs...water turning to blood, a stick turning into a snake...pretty cool eh?”
 - Moses – “But I am really bad with my words...I don't articulate well...maybe there is someone else who would be better equipped to lead?”
 - God – “No, you've got it...I've got your back Moses...you don't need to worry.”
 - Moses – “I can't do it! Pick someone else!”
 - God – “Fine, let's get your brother Aaron involved...he speaks well, so he can be your spokesperson.”
 - Moses is straight up scared to lead, but he agrees with having Aaron involved.
 - As this newly appointed leader to the Israelites, Moses (and Aaron) get their first assignment from God.
 - ²¹And the Lord told Moses, “When you arrive back in Egypt, go to Pharaoh and perform all the miracles I have empowered you to do. But I will harden his heart so he will refuse to let the people go. ²²Then you will tell him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son. ²³I commanded you, “Let my son go, so he can worship me.” But since you have refused, I will now kill your firstborn son!’” (Exodus 4:21-23, NLT)
 - Imagine you just get a new job, and your direct supervisor at that job takes the first few days to train you...after your training is done you show up and are given your assignment for the day...

- “I have scheduled a meeting between you and the CEO of the company...during that meeting, you will do some cool things...kind of like magic tricks, and then you will ask the owner to basically change everything about the company...but he isn’t going to listen because, well, it’s his company, not yours...but that’s your task for the day...oh, right, and when the CEO doesn’t listen to your requests, tell him that you will kill his oldest son...have fun!”
 - I can imagine that trip to see Pharaoh was fraught with excuses...
 - I’ve gotta pee again...
 - We have to stop, my shoe is untied...
 - I’m hungry, can we stop to get some food...
 - Hey Aaron, I think I hear someone shouting...maybe they’re in trouble...we should probably go investigate.
- Throughout all of this, Moses knows that miracles, wonders, signs of God are going to be performed, yet Pharaoh wouldn’t listen or even acknowledge the awesomeness of the wonders, so Moses, Aaron, along with the Israelites are back at square one again and again, waiting for Pharaoh to (hopefully) say, “You can go and worship the Lord your God.”
 - These miracles and wonders manifest Yahweh’s supremacy over all other gods.
 - These miracles become the standard by which all future generations measure God’s divine intervention...
 - “Remember when God _____”
 - Each of the plagues was judgment as well as mercy.
 - Judgment in that the life of the Egyptians was disrupted.
 - Mercy in that Pharaoh had a chance to listen and respond by letting the Israelites go.
 - Throughout all of the miracles and wonders...the blood, the frogs, the insects, the hail, the boils, the darkness...Pharaoh’s heart was hard.
 - Remember that in the first five plagues, Pharaoh hardened his own heart.
 - God did not harden Pharaoh’s heart, but Pharaoh did it to himself by focusing on his wants, his needs, his desires, and himself as opposed to being open to the God of the universe.
 - It was after Pharaoh resigned himself to his defiance that God through Moses stepped up and said, “If you are going to choose defiance, then you will indeed choose defiance...”
 - Even if you want to change your mind...
 - Even if your people despise you...
 - Even if you see the errors of your decisions up to this point...
 - You have dug your grave, now lie in it.

- Now the word of the last plague is revealed.
 - This isn't the last plague, yet...that is still to come. (*we are going to look at this on Saturday evening at the retreat at NLBC*)
 - This is a warning of what is to come.

READ EXODUS 11:1-8

- This plague is a big deal.
 - The other plagues were big deals too...
 - If there were frogs everywhere, I would probably feel a little bit uncomfortable.
 - If there was the darkest darkness for months on end, as is the case in Northern communities near the pole, when the sun never rises, I am sure my body would quickly realize that something is off.
 - The first plagues impacted livelihoods, but this plague goes a step further.
 - This plague involves death...not just death of a pet or livestock, but death of the firstborn son in every family.
 - In a society where the firstborn son received the family birthright, this was a big deal.
 - The firstborn was basically the most important child.
 - In the absence of the father, the firstborn son was given authority over all other brothers.
 - The firstborn son inherited twice as much as every other son.
 - The firstborn was the line of succession in a family.
 - For this firstborn to be removed was a big deal, for families as well as culturally.
 - The negotiating, if we can call it that, has ended at this point...God's warning now is final.
 - Every other plague up until this point had Moses posing the question to Pharaoh, "Let my people go?"
 - This time, Moses says, "This is how it's going down...consider yourself warned...I'm not asking, I'm telling."
 - We don't really know specifically how Pharaoh responds, because Moses storms off terribly angry.
 - We do hear that when this all goes down, there will be terrible wailing and grieving and lamenting.
- Throughout this whole situation, we see the hand of God at work.
 - God is fighting the battle of the Israelites right from the beginning.

- The Israelites are viewed well by the Egyptians.
 - Yes, the Israelites were hard workers who lived side by side with the Egyptians...
 - Just as the Israelites who lived in Babylon as good citizens, setting down roots in a foreign land (ca. Jeremiah), the Israelites here, in Egypt, lived a similar life.
 - Yet, it was because of the Israelites that there were plagues of blood, and frogs, and insects, and boils...
 - If it was me, I would probably look down on the Israelites just a little bit.
 - If the Israelites weren't in Egypt, the plagues likely wouldn't have happened.
 - But God was using this, leveraging the relationships between the Israelites and Egyptians for a greater purpose.
 - God says, "Ask the Egyptians for silver and gold," so they did, and they were given silver and gold, which were valuable then just as they are today.
 - In a way, this was a punishment to Egypt thanks to the hardness of Pharaoh's heart...Israel was stripping the wealth of the Egyptians.
 - This is just a bizarre situation, yet evidence of God caring about every single aspect of the Israelites existence.
 - There is a reminder for us here that God is present even when that seems to be the furthest from the truth.
 - Many of the Israelites, as they were in Egypt, figured that God had abandoned them.
 - I would imagine that sentiment is probably true for many even in this room...it feels as if God has abandoned you because things aren't going the way that you wish they would go.
 - When life is filled with chaos or disappointments or frustrations or uncertainties or joys or sorrows or triumphs are we aware of the presence of God in those moments?
 - Or do we say that God isn't there, God has abandoned us, God is not present?
 - Sometimes God is loud, and other times God is quiet...how well am I listening?
 - Silence

- As Moses says to Pharaoh, “There is something coming soon...this plague”, I can’t help but be reminded of John the Baptist who said the same thing... “There is someone coming soon...someone even greater than I.”
 - These are two different proclamations of soon however.
 - One is a proclamation of death.
 - Disobedience, selfishness, sin leads to death, not just in this plague of the firstborn, but in life.
 - “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)
 - “The wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23a)
 - There is something coming soon...death and separation from Father, Son, and Spirit because of an unwillingness to surrender to the King of Kings.
 - The other proclamation of soon is life.
 - Surrender to the one who is greater than John the Baptist...Jesus...it is the path to life eternal and abundant life here on this earth.
 - Abundant life is not an easy life.
 - Wednesday evening at young adults we started working through Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.
 - As Paul greets the church there, he greets them with grace and peace.
 - Abundant life is grace and peace...
 - God’s grace that allows you to make it through another day...another good day, another bad day, a day filled with sin, and a day of seeming sinlessness.
 - God’s peace is that rest, confidence, and comfort that God gives no matter what the circumstances of your life have in store.
 - “The wages of sin is death BUT, the gift of God is eternal LIFE through Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)
 - We can hear the warnings around us all we want, but a warning means nothing if we don’t act on it.
 - Stop touching the stove.
 - Stop driving without a seatbelt.
 - If you don’t take your medication, then be warned...
 - Don’t succumb to the temptation to sin.

- Bite your tongue and don't gossip.
 - The warnings can go on and on.
 - These warnings can very easily go in one ear and out the other, which is what happened with the warnings of the plagues given to Pharaoh who continued to harden his heart.
- When you heed a warning, often things go better.
 - If, as a child you learn to not touch the stove, you don't have to deal with a burned hand.
 - If you learn to run away from sin, instead of running into that pit of hate, lust, jealousy, gluttony, laziness, gossip again and again, you begin to be formed more fully in the image of Christ.
- Each of us is left with a choice as we hear the warnings all around us.
 - 1) Pursue the sin that Pharaoh pursued...ignore the warnings, because really I know better than God, right?
 - 2) Pursue Jesus the giver of life...heed the warnings because God knows what he is doing, and I have the privilege of being along for the ride of abundant life.
- This is an ongoing choice that we face daily...am I going to pursue death or life?

Questions

- Reintroductions
- Has God been speaking anything to you this morning?
- Have one person pray for your group: God, be with us as we face warnings in life. Help us to heed those warnings well, not hardening our hearts, as we pursue you. Amen.

Interactive worship

- Communion
- Cross
- Giving
- Meditation
- Prayer
- Kids station