

The Origin of Hope and Possibility

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everybody. Good to see you. My name is Anthony Parrott. I get to serve on staff here at the table. And yeah, I'm glad to be with you. How are you doing? How are you doing? How's the mood in the room? Ooh. Ah. Yeah, it's a mix. It's a mix. I'm always aware of that every time you gather a group of people together, that there's this broad spectrum of emotion and feeling at any given moment, where some of us are, we're having a bad day, a bad week. Things are not going the way we planned. Some of us are like having the day and the week and the year of our lives, and we're all mingling together right now, singing and praying and listening. And I just want us to be conscious of that as we, you know, pay attention to God's presence and spirit here today. Now, I'm going to tell you a couple of things. Part of this is my own, like, insecurity coming out.

Part of this is just me wanting to be an informative person. But I wanted to tell you a couple stats about the table church, because since COVID, Sunday attendance is not the metric it used to be in understanding, like, how big is a church and how many people are involved. Like, we're all just a little bit more skittish about attending on Sunday than we used to be. Hello, online church. Good to see you. We have things like online church that make, you know, not coming in person really easy. And I'm grateful for that. That extends our accessibility to people who might be disabled, who can't make it to a space like this, who maybe are looking for, yeah, look around. Hello, everybody. Who might be, you know, there are tons of people who are involved in the table church that don't live in DC or the DMV, because they can't find a faith community that they feel like they can be a part of. And so they have some connection to the table and they're watching from afar. But just a couple quick stats.

Just in the past six weeks, since the year started, there have been 118 people who have been involved in our groups and our classes. 118 people. Since the beginning of the year, people who have shown up on a Sunday, attended a group, they've given or they've served or they've volunteered either in a Sunday capacity, a group capacity, one of our justice and compassion things. That's 227 people. And over the past six months, so from like, you know, today, backwards six months, the people who have been involved are 340 people. So what you see in this room right now, and this is what I said, like a little bit my insecurity, because I know like there's newcomers and you're visiting, you're trying to get a feel for the church. And I'm like, there's only 40 people in here. What is wrong with this preacher? But like, there's so many more things going on than just this. There is so much life change, so much good news being shared in our groups, and our classes, and our communities, and our justice and compassion efforts, and the people who are watching online across the country. There's so many good things that God is up to through you all, through this church, through the so through many, many, many stories that not any one of us can all be aware of. So tell the stories, like if you know of some good thing, like this past week, we had a worship team meeting as we prepare for our worship director to move into a new position. And there was some testimony shared about what it's like to be at a church, being able to worship no matter what your gender, or your sexuality, or your history, or your past, or anything like that. And good news was shared. And not all of us know that story, because we weren't all there. So if you know of stories where a more beautiful gospel has been experienced, let each other know. This morning, we are taking a look at the book of Exodus. So if you've got a

Bible, I invite you to flip it open or turn it on. We're in Exodus chapter 1. And if you're getting your phones out, this is also a brief reminder that if you can, to check in on the Church Center app, just to make sure that we know you're here, particularly if you're a visitor or a newcomer.

That way, me or my colleague, Pastor Tanetta, who's on vacation this week, we can reach out to you, let you know how to get involved. We're in the book of Exodus chapter 1. And we're starting to go through the story of Exodus, because we are leading up to Easter. We're leading up to a season where we talk about salvation, and the work of Jesus, and what it is to be saved from sin. And all of these stories all find their beginning in Exodus. They all find their root in this old, old story about God's people, Israel, being brought out of the land of Egypt. And we, if you've been part of the church, if you've been in America, if you've heard people, church people use churchy language like get saved, be delivered, experienced salvation. Sometimes those words have been watered down to be nothing more than fire insurance. Make sure your soul doesn't go to the bad place, but goes to the good place after death.

[5 : 10] And so salvation is this term that scripture uses, but sometimes it's been watered down to mean nothing more than afterlife stuff. And don't get me wrong, afterlife stuff is important, but there's also life here on the ground, on earth, that matters too. And we know that God cares about that kind of stuff, because when we turn to the stories told in scripture, we see God acting not just about afterlife things, but about stuff here on earth things, about God listening and paying attention to not only the state of people's souls, but the state of people's bodies. We're turning our attention to the book of Exodus as a way of preparing for the Easter season, the season of salvation, because this is where the story all begins. So hopefully you found the book of Exodus somewhere online, on your phone, in a book.

Let's read through it. So I'm going to read through this, give a little bit of commentary as we go, and then share a couple of things that I think we all ought to take and pay attention to. So Exodus 1, verse 1. These are the names of the Israelites who came to Egypt with Jacob along with their household, and yes, this is the kind of Bible verse that stops us in our tracks because it's a list of names.

Hold on. So there's Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah. So that's a group of four. And then Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin. That's a group of three. And then Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher, another group of four. All right, so the author knows that we struggle paying attention to a list of names, so he's broken it out in a 4-3-4 pattern for us. This is something called chiasm in scripture. It's all over the place in the Bible where the writers, the editors of scripture structure things in an A, B, A pattern, and it actually gets much, much more complicated than that, where you have like an A, B, C, C prime, B prime, A prime, that sort of thing. It's all over the place. I'll show you more examples as time goes on.

So this group of 12 is the heads of these households. All together in verse 5, we see the total number in Jacob's family was 70. Now, another aside about biblical writing. 70 is a squishy number.

If you go back to a couple chapters to Genesis, where the story of Joseph and Israel and them going down to Egypt, the full story is told. There's a full list of these, the 12 tribes of Israel and their sons and daughters, and you get a number that's like 68, and the author rounds up to 70. Now, this is very common practice in ancient writing because numbers were symbolic of things, and so you would round up in order to make a point. Three was an important number, had to do with like fullness of time. Seven was an important number, had to do with weeks and Sabbath. Then you had 40, which is like Noah and the ark and Jesus in the desert. And then you had 70, which was seven times 10. It was this important number, and so authors would round all the time. Quick aside, I know we're not even into the full text of the story, but everybody have an aside for you. You may have heard a story about the world being something like 6,000 years old. Anybody familiar with this idea that the world is 6,000 years old?

[8 : 42]

So what happened is that there was this Christian bishop a couple centuries ago who goes into the genealogies of Genesis and starts doing all the math on the people's ages and dates where they were bored and all this sort of thing. And he begins to say, okay, we can tell from this math that the world was created 6,000 years ago, 4,004 BC, something like that. Now, what this bishop failed to take into account is that numbers in the Bible are intentionally squishy. You rarely find a number in scripture that hasn't been molded to make a larger theological point. And if you were an ancient person reading back then, you wouldn't hear that number or read that number and think, well, that person's just a big fat liar. No, you would instead be like, oh, they're making a point about the fullness of time or about what kind of God is being talked about. It wasn't the sort of thing where you're like, man, they're just need some journalism classes. It wasn't like that at all. This bishop, a couple centuries ago, fails to take into account that the genealogies of Genesis were not about chronology, but were about theology. And so that whole 6,000 year old earth idea is based off of a bad reading of scripture.

Okay, aside over. Eventually, verse 6, Joseph, his brothers, his technicolor dream coat, and everyone in his generation died. But the Israelites were fertile, became populous, and they multiplied and grew dramatically, filling the whole land. Now, listen to those words, fertile, populous, multiplied, grew, filled. These are all intentionally Genesis chapter 1 and 2 words. So whoever is editing or putting together these stories in the book of Exodus, they are intentionally using the same sort of words that whoever put together Genesis 1 and 2 used. Because God creates humanity, and he says, go, fill the earth, multiply, grow, be fertile. And that story gets derailed. Read the book of Genesis for more details. But the writer of the book of Exodus is saying, but wait, fulfillment is happening in God's people, in the people of Israel. Fulfillment of the Genesis 1 and 2 promises are happening.

They multiplied. They multiplied. They grew dramatically. They filled the whole land. Now, verse 8, a new king came to power in Egypt who didn't know Joseph. This theme of knowing, knowledge, is key for understanding Exodus because the lack of knowing leads to great harm, sin, and oppression. So this new king, this pharaoh of Egypt, said to his people, the Israelite people, are now larger in number and stronger than we are. So come on, let's be smart and deal with them.

Otherwise, they'll only grow in number. And if war breaks out, they'll join our enemies, fight against us, and escape from the land. So Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is fearful of this growing people of Israel Israel that Joseph brought down to Egypt. And the story is actually collapsing 400 years into a single sentence. But this people has grown to become more and more populous. And then a new pharaoh coming who has forgotten what Joseph has done for Egypt. And so it's this common story of a populous people who are perceived as a threat of being oppressed by a less populous people who will use slavery and oppression to bring them down. But it backfires. As a result, the Egyptians put four men of forced work gangs over the Israelites to harass them with hard work. So there's a multiple stage forms of oppression happening here.

Stage one is something called corve labor. Corve labor is something just short of slavery. It's forced labor. It's the sort of thing that we use here in America in our penal system to force people to do work that society prefer not to do. The majority of society would prefer not to do. So corve labor is being used specifically to build the storage cities of the pit-hom and rameses for pharaoh. Now these two cities, pit-hom or pit-hom and rameses, they're not only storage cities, they're military garrisons. They were put on the border of Egypt between Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula where Saudi Arabia is now. And they were these military garrisons to prevent invading armies from attacking Egypt. Egypt is at one of its heights of power as an empire. And so the pharaoh, Ramses II, is pouring all of this energy and resources to make sure that one, nobody leaves, and two, no enemies get in. And there's deep irony here because the Israelites, when they leave, sorry, spoiler alert, but when they leave, the book is called Exodus after all, when they leave, they're going to go through this very route. And so the cities that were built to prevent the empire from collapsing are going to be the very cities where Israel leaves while Egypt burns. So they built these storage cities named Pitthom and Ramses for pharaoh. Now, bitthom is an Egyptian word for the house of a toon or a tem. Anybody familiar with the Egyptian god Ra is the sun god?

[14 : 41] All right, so they're kind of a confusing history we won't get into, but a tem, a toon, and Ra are sort of facets of the same sun god. So this is a city built for the high deity of Egyptian religion. There's actually a hymn to a toon, a tem, he's got lots of names, that we can put up on the screen. You can sing it today if you really wanted to.

Men that slept like the dead, and now they lift their arms and praise. Birds, fly, fish, leap, plants bloom, and work begins. A toon creates the sun in the mother's womb, the seed in men, and has generated all life. He has distinguished the races, their natures, tongues, and skins, and fulfills the needs of all. A toon made the Nile in Egypt and reign like a heavenly Nile in foreign countries. He has a million forms according to the time of day and a form where he is seen, and yet he is always the same. So the Israelites, who are now this feared people by the king of Egypt, are being forced to build a military garrison in the name of the sun god Aton. And this whole idea of there being a whole other pantheon of gods that Yahweh, Israel's God, Moses's God, will deal with, become a recurring theme in our book.

So the story continues. They build these storage cities, and the more they were oppressed, verse 12, the more they grew and spread, so much so that the Egyptians started to look at the Israelites with disgust and dread. The success of a foreign people group in Egypt's eyes, the success of these foreigners, these refugees who were here from years back, their success becomes the grounds for disgust and contempt by the majority society. Does this ring any bells?

So the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites, and they made their lives miserable. This is stage two of the oppression. They made their lives miserable with hard work. Listen to the poetry that the writer is putting here, repeating words. They made their lives miserable with hard work, making mortar and bricks, doing field work, and by forcing them to do all kinds of other cruel work. In the Hebrew, it's even more repetitive than that, and made them work hard work. This enslavement happens to Israel.

So we see stage two of slavery, and then next week we'll see stage three, which is actually androcy, the attempted systematic killing of all the male children of Israel to make them die out.

[17 : 39] The reason that the Exodus story is so resonant throughout time and history is that it's where all revolution stories began.

Every revolutionary who had any awareness of the Bible claimed Exodus as their starting place. And so it's worth paying attention to that the work that Jesus is doing, and we'll talk about Jesus, don't worry.

But the work that Jesus is doing is continuing the work that starts here. So a few things to point out. Number one, Exodus is the origin story of hope and possibility. If you were an ancient Near Eastern person living three, four, five thousand years ago, you had a concept of time that was circular, cycle, in cycle, cyclical. And time repeated not only by week or by season, but by year and decade and millennia.

Time did not have trajectory. Time did not move in a line. Time only moved in a circle. And so you would find religious writings from ancient peoples that would say things like, this has all happened before, and this will all happen again.

Yes, the world would be destroyed in a flood, these ancient peoples would say, but then it will be reborn, and the same pattern will happen again and again.

[19 : 42] But then there's an innovation in how time is thought of. And it starts with Israel, starts with Abraham, this concept that actually time is an arrow that's moving in a line that has a sense of direction and trajectory.

And this introduces the idea of hope and possibility, that this has all happened before, but it never needs to happen again. Yes, there are these seasons and cycles of change and undoing and rebirth, but it's an upward cycle that's going somewhere that has, as Martin Luther King said, a long bend towards justice.

Nobody had ever believed that before. Nobody had ever believed that there was a reason for any of this, that the creation myths and stories of Egypt and Babylon and Sumer and Acadia, they all told the same thing, that humans were an accident, that the gods looked at humans with a certain amount of regrets, that they used them for labor only to please their own appetites, and that if humans ever mess things up so badly, well, then it will just all happen again to keep feeding the appetites of the gods.

But then the Israel story begins, and there's a level of intention. God created, God bent down and breathed into the human, and the human became a living soul.

God shows up to Abraham in Genesis 12 and says, I will make a great nation out of you, and from your people, all peoples will be blessed. And then in Exodus, we see this clear progression from oppression to liberation to freedom for all.

[21 : 36] So Exodus becomes the origin story of all stories of freedom, all stories of progression, all marches toward liberation and freedom.

Think about times in your life where you've experienced some amount of newfound freedom. A driver's license.

Moving out of your parents' house. Getting that first decent paycheck. And the freedom of, I can spend this however I want.

And the responsibility of, shoot, I got bills to pay. Nobody to pay them for me. The liberation of a newfound relationship. There's lots of, like, tacky things that we say when people, like, get married.

Like, oh, you're getting chained down. Oh, you're getting tied down now. But, like, no, relationships are about making promises to one another so that you can then live in freedom within the joy of those promises.

[22 : 38] When I make the promises to my wife, to my spouse, that we are going to love each other forever, that then grants the freedom for us to be fully ourselves to one another without fear of the one bailing.

There's freedom in that. We make similar tacky jokes about, you know, when someone has kids. Oh, well, you know, kids, they just weigh you down. It's a bunch of responsibility. No, kids, with this invitation of freedom to be a child again and to think with the imagination of a child and to believe outrageous things back of it.

The freedom of moving to a new city, moving into a new apartment, the freedom of getting a car, getting that new job, all sorts of freedom that we live. And some of this freedom is experienced as salvation because there's a past and there's a history that we're leaving behind as we're entering into something new.

I hope some of us, maybe many of us, have experienced the freedom when we discovered Jesus, when we discovered the God revealed in Jesus. I, if you know my story at all, I bounced around the foster system.

I had this deep knowledge as a seven and eight-year-old that if I was going to find a family and be able to stick with that family, I had to perform. I had to be perfect.

[23 : 56] I had to be my best. My name, Anthony, means priceless. And yet I didn't feel priceless. I felt used, passed around like a pawn shop for children. And so I always knew that I had to perform, perform, perform.

And as an Enneagram 3, that's all I think about. What do people think about me? How are they assessing me? Am I worth? Am I valuable enough? And then I met Jesus, the gospel, the story of a God who says, you on your own are enough.

That's salvation. That's liberation. That frees me to not be chained down to other people's expectations, but to move forward in freedom and in grace.

And every story of salvation and freedom and liberation and stepping forward in boldness to a new world of possibility finds its origin in Exodus.

Yes, today's scripture is about the beginning of oppression, about the fear and the disgust that leads to one people group enslaving another, a story that's been repeated throughout time.

[25 : 04] And yet it's when we name that oppression, when we name that origin story of darkness, it's then that we can start making the progress towards hope and possibility.

Number two, point number two. Most stories are a remix of the Exodus story. So a remix means, you know, you take the previously existing music, the drums, the vocals, the bass line, the guitar, and then you do something new and fresh with it.

It can sound familiar. It can sound like something that's happened before, and yet it's new. It's doing something different. I sing the song Hallelujah to my son Wesley at bedtime.

Say it was a secret chord. David played and pleased the Lord. And whenever I get to the, but you don't really care for music, do you? Wesley always yells at me, I do care for music.

So I played the song. I played him the Leonard Cohen version. But then I've tried to play him other versions. There's like a cinematic orchestra version. You know, there's rock and there's opera versions.

[26 : 15] There's like a thousand versions of Hallelujah. And every time Wesley is like, no, I only want the piano one, the Shrek one. It's the only one he cares about. But remixes, they exist in Scripture too, where the writers, the authors, the editors of Scripture, they're looking back in Exodus, and they start telling new stories but using old themes.

So an example, Amos chapter 9, prophet Amos speaking on behalf of God says, aren't you Israel like the Cushites, Ethiopia to me?

Says the Lord. Haven't I brought Israel up from the land of Egypt and the Philistines from Kaphtor and the Arameans from Kerr? And it doesn't matter if you know who these people groups are, these geographical locations are.

The implications of this verse are massive. God, according to Amos, is saying, the thing that I did for you, Israel, I brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

I brought you up out of oppression. God is saying, I've actually done that for other peoples as well. Yes, Israel is the people of God, the people of the promised land, but God is not exclusively Israel's God.

[27 : 27] God is claiming there is not a people group on the face of the earth that I have not worked this same redemptive work in. And so every story is a remix of the Exodus story.

When Jesus shows up in the scene, he goes back to his hometown in Nazareth. He gets into the synagogue and he preaches the lectionary scripture for the day, the book of Israel.

And he proclaims, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me and he sent me to preach good news, euangelion, the gospel to the poor, to proclaim release for the prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

It's remix upon remix. Isaiah said it four or five, 600 years before Jesus and Isaiah himself is retelling the Exodus story. And now Jesus takes this passage and applies it to himself, retelling what Isaiah said about what the editors, the writers of Exodus said.

Jesus sat and rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. Jesus began to explain to them, today the scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it.

[28 : 46] Jesus' work of salvation and redemption and liberation, it's a remix of what God started back in Exodus. Point number three, Exodus still needs to happen.

It's happened before and it still needs to happen. God is still active and moving and working in the world to bring Exodus, redemption, salvation to each of us individually and to all of us collectively.

Pastor Donnell Weish writes, the telos, the end or the goal, the purpose of the gospel, the way we know it's been fulfilled is the reconstitution of God's multi-ethnic worldwide family.

In other words, Pastor Donnell says that we know that the gospel has reached its purpose and conclusion when the worldwide multi-ethnic family of God has been brought back together again.

And he quotes Ephesians chapter three. This is what Ephesians three says. Paul is writing and says, God showed me his secret plan in a revelation.

[30 : 07] Earlier generations didn't know this hidden plan that God has now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets through the spirit. The plan is that all, and your translations probably say Gentiles.

The Greek word behind Gentiles is the Greek word ethnos is where we get the word ethnicity. It's that all ethnicities would be co-heirs and parts of the same body and that they would share with the Jews and the promises of God and Christ through the gospel.

We see a vision of this in Revelation 7. John, the revelator says, after this I looked and there was a great crowd that no one could number. They were from every nation and tribe and ethnos, people and language.

It's not that they're all erased. It's not that they're all made into one language, one tribe, one nation. It's that each nation, each ethnicity, each race, each language is being brought together with all of their differences intact and yet all united in the spirit of Christ.

And they're standing before the throne and before the lamb, Jesus. And they wore white robes and held palm branches of victory in their hands. They cried out with a loud voice, victory belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb.

[31 : 21] So Pastor Donnell continues. But the demonic imagination of whiteness, and so we're talking about race here, by which I mean a system that forces people to disorient themselves, breaking their connection to place and to land and to language, to the work that they were called to by God, all in the name of a construct of superiority, the quality of Christ that's denied to the rest of humanity.

The white supremacy and racism that whiteness produces are in the way. The goal, the end, the telos of the gospel is that multi-ethnic worldwide family of God being reconstituted, brought before the throne of God and singing victory belongs to our God.

But in America in particular, in the Western world, whiteness, the demonic imagination, the no, there's actually one people group that's got it right and the rest of you have to conform to that, that gets in the way.

And that's not the only thing that gets in the way. We talk about race here at the Table Church. We also talk about gender and sexuality, about the equality of all God's people, regardless of orientation, regardless of gender identity.

But patriarchy and sexism and heteronormativity get in the way of the telos, the end, the goal of the gospel. We look at the gospel and we hear words like Galatians 3, you're all God's children through faith in Christ Jesus and all of you who are baptized in Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ and there's neither Jew nor Greek, that's all those ethnic things.

[32 : 56] There's neither slave nor free, that's the way society has set itself up to have a ruler and an oppressed, a majority and a minority. There's neither male nor female, that all the ways that we differentiate ourselves by culture, the way that we say that there is one gender who should have power and one who should not.

No, none of that is true. You are all one in Christ Jesus. And so the Exodus story still has to continue. We still need Exodus from sexism and patriarchy.

We still need Exodus from ableism, from the idea that there's only one body type in the world that is the way that the world should set itself up around. We need Exodus from consumerism and materialism and toxic capitalism that says you lay your body and your time and your rest and your productivity on the line to make society flourish, even if you don't.

We need Exodus from generational and family trauma, from the lies that we were handed as kids and as teens, and even now as adults from our families that are constantly telling us to perform, to do better, that you aren't enough, that your decisions aren't good enough.

We need Exodus from the generational trauma of all the years where emotions were held back, where you were told to become a shell or a shadow of yourself to not upset anyone.

[34 : 30] We need Exodus from exhaustion, from the constant need to perform, put on the mask of that kind, from the constant need to rush, we need Exodus from fear-based everything.

We live in a culture that sets us up to make any move out of fear. But what if you don't? What if you do?

This is why we are telling and retelling the Exodus story, because it's all happened before and it's still happened and it still needs to happen and it's going somewhere.

The great hope of the Christian faith that has been proclaimed for millennia before us is that God is already in the future and he is pulling us, God is pulling us forward into that glorious future.

God is already victorious and in Christ has big banged a new creation of possibility and hope that is pulling all of creation into a new world.

[35 : 56] And so we retell the stories of Exodus so that we can be reminded of hope and possibility and invite our lives into it. There was one more point that I didn't write down, but I feel like God laid on my heart as I was sitting in the car this morning.

And I feel like I have a lot of conversations with you all, with pastoral counseling, things like that, where we try to play, what's the game where you're supposed to close your eyes and move the little mirror around and the ghost, what?

Ouija, yeah, Ouija board. Okay. We try to play Ouija board with God's will. Now, maybe not with a physical board and not with ghosts guiding our hands, but with trying to read out, like, well, these things aren't going well in my life, so God must not be happy.

Or these things are going well in my life, and so that must be God's blessing. Or maybe sometimes the opposite. Well, my life sucks, so at least God is happy.

Or my life is going great, and man, there's something wrong about my life going great. God must be upset. We get it all sort of mixed up. We try to figure out, you know, is God with us, against us?

[37 : 17] And I look at the story of Israel in these first 14 verses of the book of Exodus, and it is all mixed up. They're being oppressed. They're being enslaved. They're being forced into work, work, work.

And yet, the promises of creation of Genesis are being fulfilled through them. And so I want to simplify the Ouija board for you. That you can trust that God is with you.

You can trust that God is on your side. When Scripture says that if God is for us, there is nothing that can be against us, it ain't lying. When it says that there is nothing that can separate us from God's love, that means neither can you.

And so you don't have to stress yourself out about, did I disappoint God today? Did I get this red light because God's upset with me? Did this job get turned down because I didn't pray the right prayer?

You don't have to live in that sort of fear and anxiety about God's character as if it's a mystery God's character is constantly, insistently, always good.

[38 : 25] God will always be working good towards you. Now, in the midst of that, there may be hardship. In the midst of that, there may be oppression. In the midst of that, there may be pharaohs who are looking at the goodness of God at your life and who say, uh-uh, I ain't gonna have that.

But don't confuse the will of the pharaohs with the will of God. Don't confuse the bad will of those around you with the good will that God intends for you.

Let's pray. Good and gracious and almighty God, consistently, insistently, and always good, you are at work in our lives, in our church, in our city, and in our world.

You are constantly, always working towards exodus, salvation, redemption for all of us. And so may we trust that your work isn't over, that the exodus wasn't just something that happened way back when to a people way over there, but the exodus is something that's happening to me right now, that you are still calling me out of my Egypt, God.

That you are still calling me out of my oppression, out of my trauma, out of my hurt. That you are calling each and every one of us into a salvation.

[39 : 43] It's not just about a soul and a life after death, but about my body here today. God, if we can trust that that's what you are doing, then we can begin to trust each other to work towards that together.

And that when we say that we are saved, we know that that salvation is something that we are meant to hand and pass to share with everyone.

God, may we believe, may we trust that this is true. And may we be captive, our attention captive to the liberation and the salvation that you are bringing.

We pray these things. in Christ's name and the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.