

“Another Night With the Frogs”

Exodus 8:1-15

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • July 26, 2015

What would you say was the greatest moment of your life? Think about that. You have certainly had some important moments. The moment you were born was pretty important, or when you began to walk and talk. What about graduating from high school or college? I would guess that your wedding or the birth of your children were pretty important in your life.

Now while all of those are important times in your life, I want to suggest that the greatest moment in your life is right now. Why do I say that? Because this moment is the only moment you have. The past, along with all those important events, is gone. You can never get them back. If you spend your time trying to live in the past you will miss out on living. The same goes for the future. The future is not here and it may not turn out to be what you planned. If you spend your life waiting for the future you will also miss out on living. That's not to say that you shouldn't plan for the future—of course you should. But you must live in this moment. It's the only one you have and it can be your greatest moment.

The reason that this moment, and every moment, can be your greatest moment is because you can meet God in this moment. Whatever you are going to do right now, you can choose to do it with God. You can experience the presence of Christ in each and every moment. In fact, He's trying to get your attention every moment of every day and too often we miss it.

How do you experience God calling you? Often He calls to us in that still small voice but sometimes God has to get our attention and He's able to use anything in the world to do it. That's what we find in today's reading. The story of the ten plagues is one of the earliest Bible stories we learn as children. We remember the story because it is so brilliantly told with vivid language.

The plague of the frogs is the second story in the sequence of plagues that God brings against Egypt. Up to this point in the story, God has sent Moses to Pharaoh to demand that the Israelites be set free to go worship and it becomes a competition between Moses and his brother Aaron versus Pharaoh and his magicians. But Moses has God on his side. After turning the Nile river to blood, which kills all the fish and makes the water undrinkable, God sends Moses and Aaron back to Pharaoh to warn him. Verse 2 says, if you refuse to let them go, I will plague all your country with frogs.” Frogs were nothing new to the Egyptians, in fact they worshipped a fertility goddess who was in the image of a frog. Now it's a competition between the Egyptian gods and the true God.

The scene is almost comical. There were frogs everywhere. Imagine everywhere you went, there were frogs. Pharaoh had frogs on the floor and on his chair; in the bathroom and in his bed, they were in his kitchen – in the sink and in the pantry, in the mixing bowls, in the oven, and in the fridge. And not only Pharaoh's house, they were EVERYWHERE, so not only does Pharaoh have to deal with the frogs, but he has to listen to the complaining from his staff. Ken Davis writes, “If his home is anything like mine, his wife and oldest daughter have been standing on chairs screaming ever since the plague began. His youngest daughter has run out of jars in which to collect and accidentally suffocate them.”

You can imagine how much noise there would have been. The Hebrew word used here for frogs is actually derived from the word for “peep.” One author says, “Nobody will escape their incessant ‘peeping’ and their slimy hopping.” One of the things we notice about the plagues is that they increase in severity. So these early plagues are not particularly destructive. God designed them in order to get Pharaoh's attention. How is God trying to get your attention?

Ironically, Pharaoh's magicians show their own abilities by producing MORE frogs. In their effort to, in effect, "disprove" God, they actually make things worse. The last thing they needed was more frogs. I can imagine Pharaoh saying, "Alright wise guys. I don't need your help here." When we turn to the sinful world for help, we may be multiplying our problems.

I should point out that the magicians seem to have gotten the message. When the next plague comes, the plague of the flies, the magicians, for some reason, are not able to produce them. Many commentators have tried to make some theological sense out of this. They can make snakes and frogs, but not flies. This is not complicated. I think they are just really good bureaucrats wanting to save their job. They finally wised up after the frog incident and said, "We could make frogs, but flies and gnats are too hard. This is clearly God."

So at this point Pharaoh seems to have had enough of the frogs. God got his attention. He tells Moses and Aaron, "Plead with the LORD to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD." Now Moses, knowing the power of God that is backing him up, raises the ante a little. He tells Pharaoh, "you just tell me when you want me to pray. Whenever I pray, the frogs will be gone. Moses wants to emphasize that God is in control.

Now you would think that Pharaoh would have said, "These frogs are driving me crazy. Pray right now. Do whatever you have to do." But instead, Pharaoh responds, "tomorrow." John Ortberg says that if right now is the most important moment of your life, the word "tomorrow" is the most dangerous word in the English language. All Pharaoh has to do is say the word and Moses will get rid of the frogs. For some reason he says "tomorrow." Pharaoh has discovered that he can live with the frogs a little bit longer. Why is that? I can think of two possible reasons:

One reason Pharaoh hesitated may have been fear. He knew that if he let the Israelites go worship in the desert, they weren't coming back

and he didn't think he could get along without his cheap labor. He also must have been concerned about what his own people would think of him. They wouldn't see this as a sign of great leadership. The next election would be really difficult. What will people think of me if I don't appear to have it all together. Fear prevents you and I from fully trusting that God is in control of our lives.

The other reason we say tomorrow has to do with what psychologists call "habituation." You know when you get a new watch, if you haven't worn one for a while, you're aware of it all the time. But after a few days, you don't really notice it. Pharaoh had found that maybe the frogs weren't as bad as he thought. He prefers the frogs instead of the change that would be required to submit to God. He found he could live one more night with the frogs.

Denial's not just a river in Egypt and Pharaoh's not the only one who is willing to live with the frogs. A woman is assaulted by her boyfriend and ends up in the hospital. She wants to know how long she should wait before going back to him. She misses the frogs. A man misses another one of his son's baseball games because he's working late at the office. Ribbet. Every day we notice the effects of our sin a little bit less. I don't notice how my harsh words have affected my family. You become blind to the ways your need to control things and people turn into manipulation. We know we need to change, but every day we say, "tomorrow."

So what are the frogs in your life? What is it that God is trying to get your attention about? What needs to change? Or what is God calling you to do? What area of your life are you trying to hold on to, not giving it over to God? Maybe it's your money, or your need to control others, or your temper, or some addiction. Maybe God is calling you to serve in some area of ministry and you would rather sit on the sofa and watch TV. Whatever it is, you've said, "tomorrow." Every time you say "tomorrow," you are choosing NOT to live that moment with God. We think that some time in the future maybe we'll have more time or more money and then

we can read the Bible, grow closer to God, or serve. We say, “tomorrow.”

My challenge to you today is to figure out where you are telling God “tomorrow.” What is it in your life that is getting in the way of a personal relationship with Jesus. What are your frogs. And then moment by moment make a conscious decision to live that moment with Christ. It doesn’t mean you have to change what you’re doing, just do it aware of the presence of God in that moment. Notice God at work in the

world and the people around you. Have a conversation with Him.

One more thing. Giving your whole life over to God is not easy. Just as the dead frogs in our passage were piled up and stank, so also the things that God is trying to remove from your life will stink as they are “killed.” But you must remember that this God we call Lord is available to be with you in that moment and every moment after.

Amen