

+ Lesson Introductions¹ + 9th Sunday after Pentecost: VBS Sunday + 22 July 2018 +

1. God Is with Baby Moses in the River – God Is with Us! – Exodus 2:1-10

This week at Vacation Bible School we discovered how God keeps all of his promises on life's wild ride. On our first day, we learned how our God kept his promise to deliver his people from slavery by rescuing a baby named Moses from danger and even death in the Nile River.

Now why would a baby named Moses find himself in danger on the Nile River? The story starts back 400 years earlier when God used a Hebrew believer named Joseph to deliver the Egyptians and many others from a great famine. During the famine, Joseph's family settled in Egypt, and over time, the Lord blessed them by making them into a great people—two million strong! Over time, the Pharaohs, the rulers of Egypt, forgot about Joseph and grew afraid of the Hebrews. He had them enslaved, but still they grew. Later he ordered the death of their baby boys. They were to be thrown into the Nile River and drowned.

That's why we find Moses floating in a waterproof basket among the reeds on the Nile River. Moses' parents risked danger for the first three months of his life by keeping the little boy hidden, but eventually, they couldn't hide him anymore. The boy's mother created a waterproof basket and sent him down the river trusting that the Lord would protect him. If Moses was alone, who knows what could've happened, but the Lord was with the child. God rescued him through Pharaoh's own daughter, who had mercy on the child the moment she saw him. God even used Moses' sister to convince the princess to let their mother nurse the child until he was old enough to be raised in Pharaoh's household. God was with Moses. Through him, God later saved his people.

There are times when life in this broken world seems like you're on a rushing river with no control over the situation. In that moment, you feel abandoned. You feel afraid, and you wonder if God is really there for you. Satan wants to hurt you. Sin brings you trouble and fear and death, but God is still by your side! He has saved you through your Savior Jesus Christ. You see, God's promises to you are always Yes in Jesus. So when God promises that he is going to be with you when the waters of life are rough and scary or calm and comfortable, you can be confident that he will keep that promise. Jesus is with you always. That's a promise fulfilled and guaranteed with blood on a cross and with an empty tomb. Someday God will bring us safely to our heavenly home. God is with us—today and always!

Hear now a reading from Exodus 2.

2. God's People Enter the Promised Land – God Gives Us Life! – Joshua 3:7-17

On our first day of Vacation Bible School, we learned about the baby whom God sent to deliver his people from slavery. On Day #2, we saw how God finally and miraculously gave them a new life in the Promised Land.

God did miraculously rescue his people from slavery, but it took them forty years of wandering in the wilderness before they were ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses had passed away, but there was a more immediate problem. The Jordan River blocked their entrance into Canaan, but that wasn't all. The Jordan was severely flooded with snowmelt, overflowing its banks and rushing down to the Dead Sea. It was dangerous, even deadly for the Israelites to cross. Yet God was going to keep his promise to give new life to his people.

Under the new leadership of Joshua, God miraculously stopped the floodwaters of the Jordan twenty miles upstream. That way all two million people could cross safely on dry ground. He had the Israelites take twelve large stones from the riverbed to set up as a memorial on the riverbank on the other side, a reminder that the Lord always keeps his promises and gives life to his people.

God kept his promise to give us life too! He sent his Son Jesus to forgive us of our sins and give us new life free from the slavery of sin and Satan and death. Through the water and Word of Holy Baptism, the Lord creates faith in our hearts and makes us **“living stones,”** living monuments and memorials that witness to God's love for us in Jesus in all that we say and do in all of our daily, God-given callings. As the Israelites once said, **“The hand of the Lord is mighty.”** The Lord is mighty to save us. The Lord is mighty to give us life!

Hear now a reading from Joshua 3.

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3. God Heals Naaman in the Jordan River – God Is Faithful! – 2 Kings 5:1-14

On our third day of Vacation Bible School, we leaped ahead several centuries in Bible history. We came to a time when God's people had formed two separate kingdoms. At the same time, the hostile kingdom of Syria was threatening and defeating the northern kingdom of Israel in battle at the hands of a general named Naaman.

...But Naaman had a problem. Somewhere along the way he contracted leprosy—a devastating and highly contagious disease that was incurable at the time. What was Naaman going to do? During one of the raiding campaigns into Israel, a young Hebrew girl was captured and pressed into service as a servant for Mrs. Naaman. The young girl was a believer. She knew of God's prophet, Elisha, who lived in Israel. So she urged Mrs. Naaman to have her husband reach out to the prophet for healing.

Naaman did just that, but things didn't go the way he expected. Elisha had his servant tell the general that he should wash in the muddy Jordan River seven times and God would make him better. Naaman was furious! Why not come out and wave your hand over the spot or tell Naaman to wash in one of Syria's rivers? The general's servants convinced him to obey. Naaman washed seven times in the Jordan, and what do you know!?! The Lord made him clean. By faith, the Lord healed Naaman and blessed him just as he had promised.

When we say that God is faithful, we mean that God keeps every one of his promises. He kept the promise he made to Naaman through Elisha the prophet. He keeps all of the promises he makes to us in his Word. What are some of those promises? He promises to give us eternal life in Jesus. He promises to wash away our sins in the waters of Holy Baptism. He promises to give us faith so we trust in him and his Word. He promises to be with us always. He promises to hear our prayers. He promises to help us live as his children and share his love with others, and there are many more promises! Yes, in Jesus, our faithful God keeps every one of his promises!

Hear now a reading from 2 Kings 5.

4. God Saves Paul from the Sea – God Gives Hope! – Acts 27:13-26

On Day 4, we leaped into the New Testament to the time of the Apostle Paul. We found Paul with three missionary journeys under his belt having spent years planting churches across Turkey and Greece. Yet Paul was not on what we would typically consider to be a "mission trip." Paul was actually on a prison ship being hauled with 275 other prisoners, sailors, and soldiers across the Mediterranean to the imperial capital city of Rome.

Along the way, Paul and his shipmates found themselves caught in the midst of a horrible storm, but this was no ordinary storm. This was a storm that lasted for days preventing those on the ship from seeing either the sun or the stars. The wind blew and the waters were rough. Everyone feared that the boat would sink, but the Lord gave Paul hope. An angel brought Paul a message from God, "Don't be afraid. God will save you and every other person on the boat. No one will be lost. Only the ship will be lost." What do you know!?! God kept his promise. Everyone was saved, even as the ship broke up on a reef.

Overwhelmed and frightened by the rough waters of this life, your trust in the Lord can falter. You can lose hope, but God gives us hope through our Savior Jesus Christ. Through faith, we can ride out the rough storms of this life with Jesus—God's Yes to all of his promises. God did not abandon his people, and he will certainly not abandon you. God's faithfulness in the past sustains your faith. God's presence in the present fills you with his love. Now we wait in hope for eternal joy, peace, and life in the future. This isn't "I hope so" hope. No, God gives us "I know so" hope in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Hear now a reading from Acts 27.

5. God's Yes Is Jesus – Jesus Is Our Savior! Matthew 3:13-17

On our final day, we focused on the most important take-home truth of our entire Vacation Bible School—Jesus is our Savior! Of course, Jesus was at the center of every day of VBS, but an important event in the life of Jesus was our focus on Friday. The event? The baptism of Jesus.

At Jesus' baptism, God the Father spoke from heaven to say Jesus was his beloved Son. God the Holy Spirit appeared from heaven in the form of a dove. Jesus' baptism served as the beginning of his public ministry, demonstrated publicly that he is the Son of God, and also how Jesus is our Substitute Savior. You see, unlike you and me, Jesus didn't need to be baptized, since he is without sin. Instead he put himself in your place and

mine **“to fulfill all righteousness.”** From there, Jesus continued to perfectly obey God’s holy Law as our Substitute. Jesus paid for our sins on the cross. Then Jesus rose again to give us new life in him.

By accomplishing all this in our place, Jesus proved that he is God’s Yes for every one of his promises—and that was the truth at the heart of every one of our VBS lessons. God was with Moses on the Nile River. God is with us always in Christ. God gave life to his people in the Promised Land after centuries of waiting. God gives us new life in Jesus. God healed Naaman as his prophet had spoken. God is faithful in healing us of our sins through Jesus as his Word tells us. God gave hope to Paul and others during a terrible storm. God gives us hope in Jesus through all the storms of life. God kept his promise to send a Savior, and Jesus Christ is that Savior for you and me. Jesus is and always will be God’s Yes to us for all of his promises! Amen.

Hear now a reading from Matthew 3.