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Lent 2 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

## Jesu Juva

### “The Torah Story”: Exodus – The Birth of a People

When a woman’s water breaks, she is about to give birth. In the book of Exodus, the same is true for God and His people. When God “broke” the waters of the Red Sea, a **nation** was born as the people of God passed safely through the waters that God had divided. This was the defining moment for them as the people of God. From this point forward, “Out of Egypt” would be their creed. **Our God** is the God who brought us up *out of Egypt*. **We** are the people whom God brought *out of Egypt*. God had rescued them from their slavery and death in Egypt and was fulfilling His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them the Promised Land.

And the same holds true for you and me. For it is through the “breaking water” of holy mother church that we are given the new birth of Holy Baptism. Passing through those waters is the defining moment for us in our lives as Christians. It is where we are brought up out of our slavery to sin and death, given a new life, and become inheritors of the promise of eternal life in the Promised Land of Heaven. And so “*I am baptized!*” is now our creed. **Our God** is the God who has *baptized* us in His Name, the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **We** are the people whom God has *baptized*, fulfilling His promise and rescuing us from our enemies. *I am baptized* into the death and resurrection of my Saviour. *I am baptized* and re-created by the Creator who gave me life. *I am baptized* and am a child of God.

But *how can water do such great things?* We just read the answer: certainly it is not just the water – whether it is the water of the Red Sea or the water of the font – but the Word and promise of God attached to those waters. It is God using those simple, ordinary waters to accomplish His extraordinary work – the adoption and salvation of His people. Using plain, ordinary water to give us extraordinary gifts. And when God breaks waters and gives birth to His people, things are never the same again.

And so while the book of Genesis (as we heard last week) is about the beginnings of the life and promises of God, the book of Exodus shows us the birth of the people of God.

But the book of Exodus does not end at the Red Sea. In fact, the birthing of God's people takes up less than half the book. Next, God provides for the *ongoing life* of His people. He doesn't give them life and then set them off on their own. No, God never does anything half way, nor give half gifts. And so after bringing them through the waters of the Red Sea, God camps them at Mt. Sinai . . . and there He gives them what they will need for their *ongoing life* as His people, the people of God.

Now if I were to ask you what that was that God gave them on Mt. Sinai, you would probably reply the Ten Commandments. But while the Ten Commandments get most of the attention, there is a *far greater gift* that God gives His people at that time - and that is the **Tabernacle**, sometimes also called *the Tent of Meeting*. It was the "mobile Temple" where God would meet with and dwell with His people, speak to them, guide them, and provide for them what they would need the most - the forgiveness of their sins. For if it was through water that God "delivered" His people and destroyed their enemy, it would be in the Tabernacle where He would provide for their *ongoing life* through the *ongoing conquest* of their enemies - those old and persistent enemies named sin, death, and the devil.

For as any mother can tell you, birthing a child is difficult, but it is just the beginning of a lot more work of raising and training, teaching and protecting. And God's people need His raising and training, teaching and protecting. They need the Tabernacle and its service to teach them of God's promises, to train them to rely on Him, and to raise them in the faith. They need the sacrifices that would take place there to repent of their sins, and cling to God's promise of forgiveness through the shedding of blood. They need their Father to be with them in their journey to the Promised Land.

And so do we. We are too weak in sin, too filled with doubts and fears, too overwhelmed by the dangers and threats that surround us in the wilderness of life to get through it on our own. And so our triune God dwells with us, now in the "mobile Temple" of the flesh and blood of Jesus. That coming to us through Holy Gospel, Holy Absolution, and Holy Supper, Jesus continue and sustain what He birthed in Holy Baptism, providing for us all that we need to live as His people, to grow up as His people, and to remain as His people. That in Jesus our enemies be cast down and defeated in the forgiveness of our sins. That in Jesus we have our "Tent of Meeting" where God is with us, speaking to us, absolving us, and feeding us.

*Which is exactly what we need.* A God who comes to be with us and serve us; to care for us and provide for us. The God of Sinai was a frightening and fearsome God. But God shows His love for us in this, that He came down from Sinai to dwell with His people. To be with us. To serve us. And so in this, in this Tabernacle, the book of Exodus gives us a picture of Jesus, who came down from Heaven to serve – and not just in any ol' way, but to serve us by giving His life for us. By taking our slavery, our sin, and our death, and taking them to the cross. That by taking our place there, He might bring us up out of Egypt in His resurrection, and set us free. And as we heard, *if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.* (John 8)

And so Jesus is the prophet greater than Moses, the Tabernacle greater than the Tabernacle, the Exodus greater than the Exodus, the Bread from Heaven greater than the manna, and the Water of which we drink and never thirst again. And it is the book of Exodus that helps us to understand this. That baptized into Him and His life, we have all that we need. Both now as we wander in the wilderness of this life, and until we enter the promised rest of Heaven.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.