

### [Call to Worship](#)

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

Once again we're past the shortest day! Perhaps the image of God restoring summer from winter is helpful?

This image of God restoring, setting right, redeeming has struck me again this week. We see so many things that are wrong. Yet, things do change and improve. We can have confidence in God, that one day, all will be put right. And, we can be grateful for what has been put right so far. And that includes us. We have been redeemed or rescued, because of what Jesus did on the cross. Here's Galatians 3

Galatians 3:13-14 New International Version - UK

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.' [a] 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Father God, thank you for your great plan, to not let the earth and humanity corrode beyond recognition. Thank you for your restoration, in the past, in the present, and for what is to come. Thank you for what Jesus achieved in this regard on the cross, redeeming us, so that we could share in the blessing of Abraham. Thank you for the Holy Spirit, poured out on us. Thank you for this blessing too, and for the fruit that the Spirit provides us, the peace and the comfort that the Spirit gives. Father thank you. Please accept our worship. Holy Spirit, please bless this time and this space, in Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.

### [Message - The Restoring God](#)

God reveals both almighty power and the beauty of restoration, and justice, freeing the people of Israel from slavery, and restoring Egypt to where they would have been without Joseph.

God rescues, frees, delivers, and redeems, setting creation back to how it should be.

Which countries in the world are the superpowers in the world today?

Which rugby province is the superpower in the world today? All the Waikato cows will have heads hanging a little lower this morning.

It's hard to imagine Hawkes Bay being the superpower in New Zealand rugby 100 years ago. It was. Well, 3200 years ago, Egypt was the world's superpower. And what a power it was!

We might find it hard to appreciate the power that Egypt held when we look at them today. But they were a massive power before the Assyrians, before the Babylonians, before the Greek and Roman empires. We get some hint of the power when we reflect on the Roman empire, with it's scale, around the time of Jesus. So imagine this with Egypt, 1300 years earlier.

But remember, the power and strength of Egypt didn't just happen, God very much had a hand in this. That story is in Genesis, where Joseph with his God given gift of interpreting dreams, was able to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh the king of Egypt. In this dream God was warning the world to prepare for seven years of famine. Through this Joseph became a leader in Egypt second only to Pharaoh. And Joseph's job was to prepare silos to store grain so when famine arrived, the people would still have food.

Those years of famine did arrive, and people came from all over the world to buy grain from Egypt. Which meant Egypt got very, very rich. Joseph's brothers and their families, and Joseph's father, moved to Egypt where there was plenty of food. The name of Joseph was highly respected. He had saved Egypt, and helped make Egypt rich. The riches were a byproduct of the blessing that Egypt was as a nation to the world.

But this powerful nation was only a blessing for so long. Because we read in the Bible that after many years, around 400, a new king came to power who did not know anything about Joseph (Exodus 1:8). This king looked at the descendants of Joseph's brothers and saw a threat, there were so many of them. So he began to make them slaves, and then he began trying to kill all the Israelite male babies. Moses was born, and instead of being killed, he was rescued, and grew up in the palace of the Egyptian king. Now, hopefully you've heard this story somewhere...?

Moses didn't forget his true family, and when he saw an Egyptian mistreating an Israelite, he intervened and killed the Egyptian. But word got out, and Moses ran for his life, into the desert wilderness.

Forty years later that king died, and God said to Moses, it's time to return. In fact, your experience in the palace will be useful. I've heard the cries of the Israelite slaves, I'm going to set them free. And you're the perfect one to help. And Moses said "Cool!" Ah, no. Moses said to God, I'm really not interested, in fact I'm busy, in fact, if you wouldn't mind, could you please find someone else!

But God had chosen Moses. So Moses and his brother Aaron went to see Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and told him that God said to let the Israelite people go (Exodus 5:2). Pharaoh said, um, I've never heard of this God, so no, I won't let the people go. They're my slaves, they're useful, and I'm keeping them.

Here commenced the battle between Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and God, King of the universe. And God was determined to honour the covenants, the promises that He has made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 6:8), that they would prosper as a nation, and that they would settle in their own land. But Pharaoh said, too bad.

God reassured the Israelites, saying  
Exodus 6:6

6 'Therefore, say to the Israelites: "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment."

Here is God saying, I want to restore you, in fact, I will restore you. You will find justice.

And God's means of doing that, was through a series of plagues, ten of them. Moses and Aaron would go to visit Pharaoh, and ask him, no, tell him, to let the people of Israel go. Every time Pharaoh refused, a plague would come on the land. The first being a plague of blood. The river Nile and all the water of Egypt turned to blood.

#### #1 blood

Pharaoh's response was to turn his back. He wasn't interested.  
Exodus 7:23 (NIV)

23 Instead, he turned and went into his palace, and did not take even this to heart.

It's as if he says, big deal guys, I pay my magicians to do this sort of thing. Off you go. Not impressed.

#### #2 frogs

Aaron and Moses visit again. Same response. So a plague of frogs. It is rather interesting to see Pharaoh's response, not only does he summon the agents of God, but Pharaoh uses the name of God, Yahweh! He is learning quickly about God.

Exodus 8:8 (NIV)

8 Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Pray to the Lord to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the Lord."

#### #3 gnats -

Another visit, another refusal. so God sent a plague of gnats, which we should read mosquitos. With no windows or fly netting, these would have plagued the people inside and outside their homes.

Interestingly, at this point, Pharaoh's magicians' recognise something greater than them is pulling the strings.

Exodus 8:19 (NIV)

19 the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the Lord had said.

Awareness of God is growing fast in Egypt! And Pharaoh makes a concession after the fourth plague, one of flies, suggesting that the Israelites could make their sacrifices in Egypt. While this is a concession, it's hardly letting the people go.

Exodus 8:26 (NIV)

26 But Moses said, "That would not be right. The sacrifices we offer the Lord our God would be detestable to the Egyptians. And if we offer sacrifices that are detestable in their eyes, will they not stone us?"

#5 A plague on livestock followed, then

#6 boils, then

#7 hail, which isn't so unusual. This is no rare event! Hail storms kill. In 1888 240 people were killed by a hail storm in northeast India. 400 people were killed by a hailstorm in Germany in 1984, and in China in 2002, 22 were killed and 200 injured. Hail falls at 50 metres a second, or 180km/h, and each stone can weigh up to 1kg!

So when we read that the crops and trees were damaged, they sure would have been!

Pharaoh's response is fascinating

Exodus 9:27 (NIV)

27 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. "This time I have sinned," he said to them. "The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong."

Several months have probably passed since Moses and Aaron's first visit. Pharaoh is coming around. And the now bold Moses challenges Pharaoh about his genuineness.

Exodus 9:30 (NIV)

30 But I know that you and your officials still do not fear the Lord God."

There's a level of grumpiness with Pharaoh's officials. Public opinion might be shifting when we read in chapter 10

Exodus 10:7 (NIV)

7 Pharaoh's officials said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the Lord their God. Do you not yet realise that Egypt is ruined?"

But Pharaoh wouldn't let them go, and so the eighth plague, one of locusts cleaned up what the hail didn't.

#9 A plague of darkness followed, that might not seem so bad to us with our ready access to phone lights and street lights. But as when you're camping, once the sun goes down, it's dark when it's dark. This was a very scary plague back then, three days of darkness.

But still, Pharaoh wouldn't let the people go. Which brings us to the tenth plague, the plague of death, of the firstborn of each animal, and in each family. And the Passover.

Now this plague has an interesting introduction. After all that had happened in Egypt with the previous nine plagues, how do you think the people felt when they saw Moses and Aaron coming towards the palace? Surely they'd be yelling stuff, abusing them, making threats. But look at what the Bible says;

Exodus 11:3 (NLT)

Now the Lord had caused the Egyptians to look favourably on the people of Israel. And Moses was considered a very great man in the land of Egypt, respected by Pharaoh's officials and the Egyptian people alike.

Staggering!

Now, I believe that God is good. So how is it right for God to kill the first born of families and animals? It's an awful thing to ponder. We, or maybe it is I, can't comprehend the justice of this. It was Pharaoh not the

people of Egypt who were defying God. Or was it? Perhaps after all the signs and plagues, people still weren't prepared to accept God. I don't know? But I do believe that God is good. There are many things I don't understand. So I just have to trust, that for whatever reason, this was for the best, as horrific as it is.

Finally, with Egypt in ruins, Pharaoh lets the people go. Judgement on Egypt has fallen. And while we look at the restoration and rescue of the people of Israel, in some ways Egypt was restored too, back to where it was before Joseph turned up, facing famine.

Here was a nation that was blessed, to be a blessing. Instead they became proud, and used their power in ways that they shouldn't have. God acted, God brought justice. And the people, the slaves of Egypt were set free.

At the Red Sea the people stopped. Why go down to the Red Sea and not directly home along the coast? Well, there's a simple answer for that. The Philistines were a powerful force. In fact, they were powerful enough to take on Egypt a few years later (Stuart, 322). To encounter the Philistines would have been to bring trouble immediately. The Red Sea was a better option. But with the Egyptian army behind them, and the water in front of them, things didn't look too good! But God caused the water to part, allowing the people through. And then, God dealt a massive blow to the Egyptian army, allowing the water to cover them. Egypt had been well and truly devastated in every direction.

Egypt was humbled. It was stripped of its pride, and its wealth, and its power. And the people of Egypt as well as Pharaoh learned who God was, and that God was King.

Lesson 1 - keep God as King in our lives

Lesson 2 - use our power and wealth and privilege to be a blessing

Lesson 3 - God does restore!

1300 years later God continued to restore. Who was born 1300 years later, in Bethlehem, and laid in a manger? God's plan continued, through grace, by sending Jesus, to restore, deliver, redeem creation. Yes, Jesus was killed, but by rising again Jesus broke the powers of sin, of evil and of death. Jesus continues with the power of the Holy Spirit to restore, to redeem, or free people and places. And one day Jesus will return, and restoration of the heavens and earth will be complete. What confident hope we can have in our God, who cares about us, and continues restoring and redeeming us.

### Benediction

(inspired by Galatians 2:15-21)

When we go out into this world to serve God's mission,  
remember that it is no longer us who live,  
but Christ who lives in us.

The life we now live in the flesh  
we live by faith in the Son of God  
who loves us and gave himself for us.

May the grace of God which daily renews us,  
and the love of Jesus that enables us to love all others,  
and the community of the Holy Spirit that unites us into one body  
enable and empower us to obey the will of God,  
now and forever; Amen.