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Sermon Text: 2 Hebrews 11:24-28

WHEN DISGRACE BECOMES A TREASURE

I grew up with an image in my mind of Moses as a rock star. Before the days of Netflix or even VCRs, my family would watch the movie, “The Ten Commandments” when it aired on television annually around Easter. To this day, I still consider it a great movie. The part of Moses was played by macho man Charlton Heston. When my Sunday School teachers taught me the stories about Moses and Egypt and the Ten terrible Plagues, I pictured Charlton Heston fearlessly, valiantly strutting into Pharaoh’s great hall. Even the account we heard in the first reading today, where Aaron’s staff swallowed up the staffs of Pharaoh’s magicians, would make me think, “Ha! Take that, Pharaoh! You’re going down!” Maybe Moses even tweaked the nose of one of the guards by the door on his way out as a befuddled Pharaoh stared helplessly after him.

But as I grew older and became more familiar with Scripture and with life and even as I prepared for this sermon, I have realized that’s not how it was. The lesson today from Hebrews chapter 11 tells us that Moses suffered disgrace. Think of what that word means – disgrace. It means you are not regarded as a rock star. You are an embarrassment; you carry shame; people laugh at you or hold you in contempt.

A passage in the Bible states: *Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.* People often find that passage humorous because it was written by Moses himself! “Hey everyone, let me tell you all, let me brag about how humble I am!” But with the word “humble” Moses didn’t mean self-effacing. The real sense of that word “humble” is miserable and wretched.

Think of what a fall from grace Moses experienced at age 40. Adopted from birth to be a prince in the royal family, he had enjoyed the finest schooling and privilege that the empire could offer. But overnight he became an infamous scoundrel in the eyes of everyone, forced to flee Egypt like a homeless refugee. Even when he tried to bring together two fellow Israelites who were brawling he was told to get lost and mind his own business. He was no hero to them.

Forty years later when God appeared to Moses in a burning bush, Moses pleaded with God not to send him to Egypt. Moses went, but I doubt there was a spring in his step as he made the journey back. When he returned, there was not an aura of awesomeness about him that made people stop what they were doing and gaze in wonder. The

Egyptians didn't like him but neither did his own people. The leaders of the Israelites they were quite skeptical. "Who is this guy? He comes from out of nowhere and expects an audience with us. He's not one of us. He hasn't endured the years of slavery we have." Every time God would send a terrible plague which should have served as proof of Moses' legitimacy, and Pharaoh would respond by doubling down on his cruelty to the Israelite slaves, the leaders of Israel would blame Moses. Why does this Moses character have to stir up the pot? He is only making matters worse for us!

Moses appeared before Pharaoh – not because he was brave, not because he was a patriot or some heroic civil rights leader and not because he even wanted to. He did it because God told him to. He experienced the sensation of being squeezed between personal dread and divine will. Try to imagine the spectacle - this smelly shepherd from out of Yokelville standing before the refined, metropolitan dignitaries of the royal court – making demands on an emperor – no one ever did that – a demand that an entire nation of slaves be released! How absurd! If any of them still remembered Moses from 40 years earlier, imagine how they pitied him now. It's a miracle Pharaoh didn't simply have a guard cut Moses down and be done with it.

And even after Egypt was brought to its knees and the Israelites were on their way to the Promised Land, the people quickly blamed Moses for every problem they encountered.

Moses is arguably the 2nd most prominent person in Scripture. He suffered plenty of disgrace. But the most prominent person in Scripture suffered disgrace too. That would be Jesus. Jesus was not regarded as a rock star while He was here on earth either. Even the most pivotal moment in all of human history - the death of Christ on the cross for our salvation - went mostly unnoticed by the world. But the Bible tells us, *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus... who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Jesus didn't come to establish a kingdom in this world nor to win the fleeting glory of this world. He came to rescue us out of this world to an enduring Kingdom filled with glory. Therefore, if we are affiliated with Christ through faith, the same pattern will manifest itself in us. The Bible tells us: *Do not love the world or anything in the world. The world and its desires are passing away, but the person who does the will of God lives forever.* We can put it this way: Like Christ, like Christian. As Christ suffered disgrace, so will the Christian. As Christ died, so will the Christian. As Christ rose bodily out of the grave, so will the Christian. As Christ ascended into heaven, so will the Christian. As Christ rules all things at God's right hand, the Christian rules alongside Him.

Therefore disgrace for the believer here on earth is turned into the greatest treasure. Listen again to the Hebrews 11 reading today: *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.*

The Apostle Paul described his own life the same way: *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.*

But, we might ask, there is the kind of disgrace I may suffer that I didn't ask for, like being held suspect for being a Christian or preferring the needs of others to my own willingly suffering injustice for Jesus sake. But what about the kind of disgrace that is my own fault -the disgrace I bear because of my own sins, the kind of shame I'd dare never mention to anyone else?

This is when the disgrace of Christ becomes the greatest treasure of all. For it was on the cross that the shame and disgrace of your sins were transferred onto Jesus and He hung fully exposed before the angry, judging stare of His heavenly Father - all the blame fully piled on Him. Jesus suffered the embarrassment before God in your place. He experienced the terror of God's damning disapproval so that you could be released and set free from judgment by His total forgiveness. Because of Jesus' atoning sacrifice you now have a God who is kind and gracious toward you and receives you without hesitation, without conditions, without a single critical thought toward you.

Moses is a beautiful example of God's grace and forgiveness. Do you know why he had to flee Egypt in the first place? He had murdered a man! And yet here in Hebrews 11 he is spoken of glowingly, as though there had been no sin, as though the murder never happened. That's how beautiful God's grace is. As we trust in Jesus, our record of sins before God is erased and He only sees us as being holy in Jesus.

Oh what glory, what praise Jesus deserves! I have nothing to give him but disgrace. He has nothing to give me but the treasures of peace with God and the joy of heaven. Now therefore even those earthly disgraces which I only brought on myself are no longer a judgment from God. But as I look to Jesus they are transformed into a vehicle by which He intends to bless and save me.

Dear friends, none of us needs to be a rockstar believer. It is enough for us to cling to Jesus. Through faith in Him all earthly disgrace becomes treasure.