

Columbia, Missouri
The Worship of God • July 17, 2022



THE SCRIPTURE
Exodus 14:10-17

As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. Then I will harden the hearts of

the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers.

THE MESSAGE
“Then Sings My Soul: Glorious”
Mark Briley

As a prelude to the message, if possible, view this video clip:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L-NwSdPEtDvYqjCFxzZH7MZXiyXozQLg/view>

“I feel glorious, glorious, got a chance to start again!” That’s probably sermon enough for today.

Have you ever had a chance to start again? I’m not just talking mulligan’s here. I’m talking life reset. I’m talking forgiveness fully and authentically granted and humbly received. I’m talking “*been put through the ringer but came out the other side still standing and stepping forward.*” What now? “*I feel glorious, glorious, got a chance to start again!*”

The song submitted and selected for today speaks of this very feeling. Rapper



Macklemore¹ and featured song writer and vocalist, Skylar Grey², offer this song as the “*happiest song they ever wrote.*” Macklemore had written the verses before they ever landed the hook that you’ll be singing all afternoon: “*I feel glorious, glorious!*” Skylar Grey gifted us with that hook after picking up that one word from the 509 that comprise the song. She gasped, “*Glorious! That’s*

got to be the title of the track.” The reality was both of them were coming out of some thick seasons in their lives, rebounding into a new euphoria of redemption, of starting again, of being more aware of the gift of their lives than they had ever appreciated before. It was freedom. It was a new lease on life.



¹ www.macklemore.com. While I utilized multiple online sources with tidbits about Macklemore’s life as well as info about *Glorious*, the website shared here is his personal site which can guide you further into his story should you have interest.

² www.skylargreymusic.com. Skylar Grey plays an important part in the creation of this song and also supplements pieces of info about the process that helped shape this sermon.

It's why Macklemore had the idea for the music video that you've seen part of already. He drove over to his Grandma Helen's in Modesto, California, to surprise her and take her out on the town for her 100th birthday. "*What do you want to do today, Grandma!*" "God," she says, "*I want to do it all!*" And they hit the town. Grandma eggs the neighbor's house.

Side note – not endorsing this practice. I may have told you that after the first night in our first home in our first neighborhood we lived in Indianapolis, the first day after our first wedding anniversary, we woke up and noticed something strange on the front window. Stepping out the front door revealed a crime scene of the sunny side down variety. Eggs smashed all over our windows, front door, and driveway. I stepped out further in the drive to examine the scene when I stepped over the largely printed text in chalk that simply said, "*Welcome losers!*" Wasn't the favorite neighborhood we've lived in. So... be kind to your neighbors. Don't egg them.

But... for Helen at 100, she enjoyed herself. They shop and sing daytime karaoke. She takes her grandson to the tattoo parlor, and he gets Helen's name scripted right over top of his bicep. It's a sometimes crass but ultimately beautiful video. What feels more glorious than such freedom at 100, convertible top down, and a day to do anything you want! And what a gift that they made that space to share in the glory as she joined the heavens last year. Don't miss the chance to feel glorious today because tomorrow isn't promised. I wonder how many of you, if I asked you to describe how you feel about life right now would say, "*I feel glorious!*" I think God would love for all of us to have those type of feels about our lives. Every parent does.

My youngest son turned 11 this week. It was the last day of VBS, and he'd had a full day in which he got to smash a pie in his dad's face. A little aggressive, son. We went to dinner afterwards at the restaurant of his choosing – Texas Roadhouse. They put him on a saddle and cheered and celebrated him, and he got his wish fulfilled. His wish? "*Don't limit how many of those fresh hot rolls I can eat.*" We got home and he said, "*I don't want this day to end.*" He felt glorious... if but even for a day. What parent doesn't long for that for their children? What parent doesn't also know that there will be trouble in this world?



Jesus promises it after all as clearly as possible: "*In this world you will have trouble. [period].*" (John 16:33). As a friend looked me in the eyes this week and said, "*This is not what we planned but here we are.*" Glorious?!? I'm not so sure.

It's the question we're sifting through today as part of our *Then Sings My Soul* series, where we're looking for sacred hope in secular music. We launched last week with

Depeche Mode's *Personal Jesus*, and I loved hearing from you this week about the ways that message struck a chord with your spirit. That's what we're after.

One Broadway friend shared a Spotify playlist of the 70-plus Broadway submissions for the series, and others sent me word about a song or two from the devotional John created with the song list. I love it. This is how faith infuses our lives, and when we've got eyes and ears to look and listen for it, we start seeing the presence of God everywhere.

Macklemore's *Glorious* took me right to the edge of the Red Sea with Moses and the Israelites. The song is so uplifting that the pairing with the fear they surely felt as they entered the parted sea with Pharaoh's army breathing down their necks seems ill-fitting. The Israelites are at a dead end. The plagues didn't end the oppression. Feeling like a refugee on the run wasn't glorious in any way. If one of Israelites was stepping into the muddy seafloor singing, "*I feel glorious, glorious!*" I'm sure somebody would have tripped him, cursed him, and told him where he could go. But glorious isn't fully appreciated without the overcoming. "*No guts. No glory,*" goes the saying.

You've been in that place before – a dead end; a hardship so great that '*future*' held no meaning for you. The Israelites were in such a space as they were running for their lives through the sludge of the sea in hopes of a promised land. That's where that story intersected Macklemore's song for me. "*It's exodus searching for euphoria,*" raps Macklemore, "*trudging through the mud to find the present.*" We're going to bump up against these dead ends but don't give up when you're trudging through the mud. Keep going. A new chance to start again is coming.

Fear pushes us backward. Fear pushes us into retreat mode. The Israelites are barking at Moses – "*Dude... is there something wrong with the cemetery plots back in Egypt that you had to lead us out here to die? We'd rather die back there under the oppression than be out here in this mess now.*"

We've all felt this retreat mentality. And the human race *is* in trouble... has been for a long time. Enormous energies have been expended by many trying to get us out of this mess. The devotion of those trying to pull us out of the muck is amazing – parents, teachers, healers, counselors, VBS leaders, your friend who won't give up on you... the Moses' of the world. At the center of this effort is God. This is why Moses hasn't given up yet. And God's centering work in what otherwise seems like utter chaos is found in the most comprehensive term we have for what God is doing: *salvation*. [let me hear you say it, Knights of North Castle! SALVATION!]. As

Eugene Peterson says, “*Salvation is the biggest word in the vocabulary of the people of God.*” And don’t you forget it. This Exodus moment is the epitome of God’s story of salvation – fear to freedom.

Last week, I shared the first three steps of Recovery’s 12-steps. Simply stated, they amount to the following: *I need help. I can’t deliver myself. Jesus, I believe you can. I turn my will over to yours.* I had no intention of riding that further until it serendipitously resurfaced this week as I listened to everything I could associated with Macklemore’s song, *Glorious*.

Ben Haggerty, Macklemore’s given name, is a recovering addict – issues with alcohol as young as 12-years-old and heavier drugs added from there. His drudgery through the mud of addiction is his exodus story of salvation... and it’s not once and for all... it’s ongoing. Even with fame and money and tremendous advocacy for those battling addictions, those bullied because of their sexual identity, and marrying his longtime love, Tricia, and welcoming three children, Sloane, Colette, and Hugo into their lives, Macklemore relapsed momentarily during the pandemic. He’s been open about it and bounced back well but the power of addiction, and the power of your hook ups and hang ups, are real.

Do we cave in fear, or do we press through the sludge toward freedom? It’s a real choice. Step Four of Recovery’s 12-step process is to “*Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*” It’s an effort to discover and get real with our liabilities. When we don’t, we blame others, and we justify our harmful behaviors. Step Four is the beginning of a lifetime practice that is our exodus from insecurity, worry, anger, self-pity, and depression.

It’s why Macklemore is honest about his struggles and invested in the freedom for all from addiction, its stigma, and the associated oppression. It’s Moses’ word to his discouraged followers who wanted to give up – “*There’s a way out of this. There’s a way to something better. It’s freedom. It’s salvation. And it feels glorious.*”

Do you need this encouragement today? Do you have ears to hear and face it head on or have you tuned it out? Macklemore will turn 40 next year, but he remembers his early twenties... drowning in addiction but functioning with his talent. He joined his family on a trip. They were saddened and grieving and angry about the state of their son and brother’s life. Macklemore said, “*I was so selfish. All I cared about was getting my fix – even on the trip—first priority.*” He could play the games and try to do the family things, but it was no priority for him. He said, “*I know my brother and my parents loved me, but I could see it so clearly – they didn’t like me.*” They led him to the water’s edge and were holding back the walls of water as best they could so their son could walk through to the promised land, but they couldn’t make him walk until he

decided on his own. He did, and it's been his life effort ever since. You hear the music, and you see the red carpets and you think, "*Well of course that feels glorious.*"



But do you know what he's doing to part seas these days? He's the Creative Director for CLEAN Cause³ – an organic, natural caffeine beverage company that donates 50% of its profits to fund sober-living scholarships to those in need. The company has already provided 3,000 scholarships to those in recovery amounting to over \$1.6 million dollars and counting. He knows firsthand that the exodus from bondage to freedom is a daily

effort. His history has shaped this present passion.

Macklemore tells the story of Kevin; a kid who grew up in the same neighborhood as he did. Kevin was six-years younger than him, but they ran around together nonetheless as kids in neighborhoods do. They ran into each other one day after years had separated them. This was some 15 years ago now. They had that moment you do when it's been a while, but you connect with someone from your past. They learned they both were working at recovery and started going to meetings together. Macklemore said, "*Kevin was so authentic. When he spoke of his struggles at the meeting, you were just drawn into his authenticity, and you wanted him to win.*" Kevin was trying to make it as a rapper, too. Macklemore said, "*He wasn't very good, but he was passionate. As he was struggling with an Oxi- addiction, I said if he could stay clean two weeks, I'd get him in the studio to lay down a few tracks.*"

Kev was stoked, and the added incentive helpful. They went to meetings. One day. Two. One week. Two. He made it. Macklemore picked him up and drove him to the studio, and Kevin recorded three songs. He went home listening to his own voice on disc, his own voice, on a real production for the very first time. The next morning, however, Macklemore got a call from Kevin's sister saying he had overdosed. Kevin was gone. He made it two weeks, realized a dream, and went home and celebrated with drugs that killed him. He was 20years-old. And Macklemore says, "*That could be me. I can easily live on that same edge.*" And so is the battle, every day, to live forward into glory and not fall into despair. Maybe it's not opioids for you but there may be something that has you constantly on the edge of falling again... and sometimes falling hard.

³https://cleancause.com/?gclid=CjwKCAjw5s6WBhA4EiwACGncZXmQWvixtY98fIi101jTVc6P0anKmcBp0rUr2vNt1eEEcCf7hRsgnRoCxVcQAvD_BwE

Whether you're the Israelites trudging through the muddy seafloor, you're battling addiction, or you're wrestling through a crisis of mid-life identity, don't give up. It's a wise woman in my life, who I've heard say to those struggling with any number of things – *“This struggle isn't your identity. This is just a big feeling in this moment. You'll not feel this way in an hour. Don't fall to despair.”*

The Israelites were born for salvation; for freedom. You were born for more than fear. You were born for glory. It's that hook that Skylar sings, her favorite line in the whole song because it reminds her to stay focused on what she's here for: *“I was born for this, born for this. It's who I am, how could I forget? I made it through the darkest part of the night and now I see the sunrise. Now I feel glorious, glorious!”*

What are you born for? How are you living that life? Steve Jobs once said, *“Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma -- which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition.”*

When you're living in that zone of your purpose and calling and you're overcoming the obstacles, challenges, and fears, you'll be singing, *“I feel glorious!”* Do you know what happens right after Moses and the Israelites pass through the sea to the other side that holds freedom, salvation, and promise? Exodus 15 launches with what is called the Salvation Song. The first line? *“I will sing to the Lord for his triumph is GLORIOUS!”* How 'bout that?!

And when Jesus says, *“In this world you will have trouble,”* do you know what he follows that line with? Verse 33 continued, *“But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

That's glory... and I want you to feel glorious. It's more than a feeling. It's a freedom that is indescribable. It's salvation. And it's a prompt for you to sing, *“I was born for this!”* and for you to spend your days doing just that. There will be trouble. You'll struggle with something – addiction, relational strife, physical frailty, emotional detachment, and even experience painful, excruciating things that we never wanted, asked for, or have control over. How we respond to these realities is a creative act.

Who starts cancer foundations? Usually, people who have lost a loved one to cancer. Who organizes recovery groups? Mostly people who have struggled with addiction. Who stands up for the rights of the oppressed? Often people who have experienced oppression. And so, whatever it is you are facing, whatever Red Sea has you frozen in fear, ask instead, *“What new and good thing is going to come out of even this?”*

When you ask this question, you take something that was out of your control and reframe it as an opportunity take part in its healing. Sure ... we may naturally react first with the angered sarcasm of the Israelites. We've got to grieve the hardships and even shake our fists at the heavens for the injustice of it. But, to quote Rob Bell, "*As you move through it, as time does its healing work, you begin to look for how even this has potential.*"⁴

Our God is a redemptive presence in our lives. Not a destructive one. So, let's join in the redemptive effort. Let's stop on the salvific shorelines having trudged through the mud and sing, "*I feel glorious!*" Please don't miss the chance to sing of that glory. Life's too short.

On the release of Macklemore's video for "*Glorious*" that starred his beloved grandmother Helen, he posted its release along with this message: "*Grandma – nothing is more glorious than you. Happy 100th. Thank you for the Werther's Originals. The advice. And for being part of something I'll treasure forever. Love, Ben.*"

Where we are today in our lives... you and me... may not be where we planned but nevertheless, here we are. In it all, may you know salvation; may you know freedom, may you rejoice with those you love, may you feel glorious.

May it be so.

If possible, conclude this message by viewing this link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L-NwSdPEtDvYqjCFxzZH7MZXiyXozQLg/view>

BROAD HEARTS BROAD MINDS BROAD REACH

⁴ From Bell's, "*How to be Here.*" HarperOne Publishing. New York. 2016.