



Main Street Congregational Church

145 Main Street, Amesbury MA 01913

April 6, 2025 - Door Markings

(Exodus 12:1-14)

At our deacon's meeting this week someone asked about how the Sunday readings get chosen. The person asking is a college professor and that gave me the opportunity to give a lengthy answer having decided a professor loves going down rabbit holes of discovery (and I love talking about that stuff). I will skip the long version of the answer (but feel free to talk to me at coffee time) and give the Cliff note version. I don't generally choose what to read, rather the stories are assigned by a lectionary/series of readings which have been developed by ecumenical councils. Sometimes the readings are ones I love and have a thousand ideas for preaching and sometimes I want to toss it out and do my own thing but generally I stick with it and get/have to struggle with the words, plead to God and trust the Spirit will shape a sermon and worship service.

This would be one of those weeks. Yes, I understand how significant this story is. It is when, after 430 years of bondage in Egypt, the Israelites will be freed and able to start a new life. This is huge. Repetitive and ritualistic language is used to remind God's people of this transformative event. To arrive in the future they will first need to leave the past. The month of their departure marks the beginning. Note it well. Remember it and honor it with very specific rituals. Rituals for how to prepare the food to honor the situation and to be sustained when finding their way to new life. And it goes on to give instructions for marking the doors of their houses with the blood of the lambs.

I read a commentator (whose name escapes me now) who suggested that Moses likely struggled with these instructions given to him by God in the same way I struggled with having to preach on this text. They wrote "Can you imagine the logistical nightmare that Moses was handed? Oh, and by-the-way don't forget to put some of the lamb's blood on your doorpost—or the angel of death with snuff you out. I can't even imagine standing in front of a congregation of 150 people and giving those instructions, and expecting anyone to really take me seriously. Someone in the church would think they had a better lamb recipe—there's a great one in the parish cookbook, you know. Someone else always hates to be in a hurry, and prefers to jabber through meals. (We all know who that is...) And, someone would check the calendar on their iPhone and realize that they have a conference call on the 14th at twilight—how's the 15th work for you? "

Preaching about slaughtering lambs is not high on my list. Smearing blood on the door of my house doesn't have an instant appeal. Curious instructions for a Protestant in 2025. But to a faithful Jewish person about to be freed from bondage? This ritual slaughter and sharing of food would be in concert with the purity and food laws by which they expressed their devotion to God. These details are expressions of their faith. Blood was understood to be sacred. It is the

life force. Marking a door with blood was a visual statement of faith. Something new was coming. God was enabling it. The blood on the doorway indicated their commitment and trust for what God was doing.

All that is true but I have a hunch there aren't many of us contemplating marking our doors with lamb's blood later this afternoon. The power and hope in this story is not dependent on our slaughtering lambs and smearing blood. The power and hope in this story is in our trusting and responding to God's promise to bring freedom from bondage. The ritual was about attention and sharing. The ritual was about choosing life. The blood on the door was a visual statement about the presence and way of God which is to bring life and freedom.

If you drove in the brick driveway this morning, or if you have walked down Main Street this weekend, then you might have noticed the installation of doors on our front lawn. God bless Heidi Fram and her merry crew of creators who found a way to make a visual statement about the presence and way of God without slaughtering lambs and smearing blood. On our front lawn are 6 doors. Each with a bright rainbow color. Each with one word painted on it. "God's doors are open to all". A visual statement about the presence and way of God.

I imagine this installation will be met with gratitude and some resistance. This God love and welcome thing is rejected by those seeking to claim privilege and preference. Yet we state and claim what we believe. As Main Street Church we affirm the love and expansive, unconditional welcome of God with literal doors on our lawn.

Most of us won't be doing this kind of installation on our lawns but each of can find ways to mark the doors of our lives with love and welcome. The doors of our homes, the doors of our minds, the doors of our hearts. We can literally put up signs that name love and inclusion in our yards - on our doors. We can read, watch, listen to things that remind us of God's love and encourage us to join in. We can be intentional and thoughtful about the words we speak and texts we share choosing to share stories of kindness, inclusion, hope. We can critique stories that fail to be loving and accepting and skip the name calling and not be cruel. These actions can tell of love to the world and remind us of God's presence and guiding us.

Isn't it curious, isn't it life giving - that the story assigned to us for today, as odd as its rituals are , has power and promise for the reality in which we live? God's doors are open to all. Amen.

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