



Easter Vigil, Year C, April 3, 2010

Exodus 14.10-31; 15.20-21

A Story of Exodus as told by The Rev'd Tara Livingston

In a land not so far away, in a time in the not so distant past, there were people who had become enslaved to the pursuit of a career and chained to their electronics. While they thought that they were free because they could leave their office and drive home in their car, to sleep in their plush bed that could be found in their luxurious house, they really were slaves. Their children went to the best schools and had the nicest quality of friends but were no longer allowed to play outside until the street lights came on because there was no one home in the houses on their streets to preside over them. To make up for the lack of outdoor freedom even the children had become slaves to the many flat screens in their house. Day after day, night after night, their faces glowed in the shimmering reflection of the electronic light while they were bombarded with images that the young should not see.

These people had become so enslaved that they no longer noticed the chains that shackled them. The Blackberry vibrating in their pockets while on a drive in the mountains was such a normal part of their daily existence that they didn't know that there was any other way to live. A day on the slopes or at the shore of the lake, while peaceful from the outside looking in, was really just an extension of their work day because their minds kept mulling over the latest crisis at the office. Their bosses were nice people who saw no wrong in expecting emails to be answered within an hour of sending it because they expected the same from themselves.

Day after day these people sacrificed the greatest gift, the gift of time, at the altar of a pay cheque and a title. Day after day the light in their eyes grew dimmer and dimmer as the dreams and ambitions from childhood muted and became but a distant memory instead of a way to live.

From this multitude of people one woman sat apart. She witnessed, while on her daily journey on the train, the dimness and exhaustion of the people. There was nothing special about this woman, she was neither articulate nor influential, but from her eyes a light shone. This was a woman who lived her life on the edges of society, who viewed the world through the eyes of God. Day after day she took her concerns to God in prayer and day after day she listened for an answer.

God said to her, go to the leaders and tell them to break the chains that bind my people. The woman, who was neither articulate nor influential said no, Lord, surely you can't mean me. God repeated the request and assured her that she would not be alone.

So the woman entered the halls of power speaking to the CEO's, the politicians and the executive directors and after they had listened for a short time they had her discreetly escorted out of the building by security. She was distraught and disheartened and again turned to God.

"I will show them the way to slow down, I will guide them back to their families and themselves. Trust in me and prepare to speak again", God said.

The next day the markets crashed and the stock markets crumbled. The very basis for the enslavement came to a screeching halt and the people panicked. But rather than relaxing, rather than refocusing on their families and on God, they redoubled their efforts and put in more hours than ever at the office. The children continued to stare off into the abyss of the glowing screens in their houses never thinking to go outside to play.

The woman wailed and wailed as she fell to her knees to pray. "God", she cried, "they will not listen! There is nothing that will save them from their commitment to what they see as valuable! They will not listen to me and they do not even see you through the haze of accumulating more stuff! They work to pay for things that they

don't have time to use and sacrifice relationships to do so! Oh God, this is an entire generation lost!"

But God would not be deterred. "Invite them for a walk", said God. So, day after day the woman befriended befuddled people on the train and made plans to walk with them. When they met at the edge of the pathways she would smile and say, "would you mind turning off your phone? I find them so distracting". And they did. And they walked and they talked and slowly, slowly, they recalled a life in the distant past that wasn't a rat race.

And miracle of all miracles, once they had gone for a walk with the woman they started asking their workmates to do the same. Even CEO's and politicians began turning off their cell phones and their Blackberry's to just wander and to wonder. The people who had been enslaved began leaving at the end of their work day leaving things that hadn't been done for the next day, feeling no compunction to complete every task on their list. The rush hour that used to begin at 5:30 slowly moved up to 4:30 and then to 4:00. And even as they drove home they were no longer in a rush, no longer aggressive on the roads.

Their children were at first reluctant to leave their screens which had become their most constant companions but eventually they stopped turning them on at all most days. Instead they waited with their running shoes on for the return of their parents knowing that they were going to go and play ball at the park, or walk on the path, or throw a stick for the dog, or go to the library to wander if it was raining. And the light in their eyes, in the eyes of the children, began to glow not from the reflection of the screen but rather from the glow of being loved.

The companies continued to run and to flourish with a happy workforce rather than a frantic one. The desire for a roof over their heads and a bed to sleep in became enough in itself, and the Jet Ski sales declined.

And slowly, slowly, the people remembered God. After years of believing that God had abandoned them, they realized that it was they who had abandoned God. And after years of living in slavery, the people emerged from the fog, turned their eyes back to God, and God smiled.

© Rev. Tara Livingston, 2010