

## April 22, 2023: How God Works

### Acts 7:1–29

Each day, it's important to take your bearings. Where are you today? In the Easter season, in the scriptures, in your daily life, in your very self? Spend a few minutes getting your bearings for the day.

Let's briefly examine where we are in the Book of Acts and then begin our day with a prayer for deliverance—for ourselves, our fraternity brothers, and all Exodus Men.

You are with the growing community in Jerusalem. The first Christian community remains a model, as they prayed, followed the apostles' teaching, served the poor, and celebrated in their homes. We are seeking to enter into the experience of the resurrection with them and to join in their mission as witnesses.

Pray that the Lord grants deliverance to you, your family, and your fraternity.

Pray for freedom for all men in Exodus, just as they are praying for you. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

### A Reading from the Book of Acts

And the high priest said, "Is this so?" And Stephen said: "Brethren and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Depart from your land and from your kindred and go into the land which I will show you.' Then he departed from the land of the Chaldeans, and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living; yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him in possession and to his posterity after him, though he had no child. And God spoke to this effect, that his posterity would be aliens in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and ill-treat them four hundred years. 'But I will judge the nation which they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.' And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

"And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him, and rescued him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him governor over Egypt and over all his household. Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent forth our fathers the first time. And at the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. And Joseph sent and

called to him Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five souls; and Jacob went down into Egypt. And he died, himself and our fathers, and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

"But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt till there arose over Egypt another king who had not known Joseph. He dealt craftily with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, that they might not be kept alive. At this time Moses was born, and was beautiful before God. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house; and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.

"When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking the Egyptian. He supposed that his brethren understood that God was giving them deliverance by his hand, but they did not understand. And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and would have reconciled them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you wrong each other?' But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' At this retort Moses fled, and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons."

#### Reflection

The high priest asks Stephen if the accusations about his preaching concerning the destruction of the Temple and the alteration of the Law of Moses are true. Stephen responds by recounting the story of salvation history for them. The Jewish leaders certainly know this story and can easily recite it to Stephen. The reason Stephen does this is to show them that Jesus is not something opposed to their tradition, but rather he is the fulfillment of it. He is the hope, the fulfilled promise, of all that they believe.

God does not act in the ways we expect. He promised land to Abraham, and yet he did not experience it. He promised him a son but still no son had come in his advanced age. In order to rescue Abraham's descendants, he has Joseph cast into prison. To be free, Israel was first enslaved. To prepare Moses to free Israel, he grew up in the enemy's household, and then thought he could correct things through his own power. Moses had to abandon everything and flee into the wilderness.

This is the way God works, not according to the world's logic or through human power. He leads us to trust in him completely by doing things in a way that does not even seem possible. He asks for our faith and our trust, and then he acts, doing for us what we could not do on our own.

In your time of silent prayer today, reflect on the events from Stephen's account of salvation history. Notice how God acts in unexpected ways. Now, relate this to the formation of your Plan of Life. Have there been any surprises yet? God has a unique plan for your prayer routine which he will reveal to you when the time is ripe. As you continue to discern your plan of prayer, expect the unexpected.

## Week 2 Action Items

1. Build your new prayer routine.
2. Try a Trappist or monastic beer for celebration
3. Keep your fraternity strong.