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Exodus 7:8-13  
WE ARE BETTER EQUIPPED  
TO SET PEOPLE FREE

Wouldn't it be nice to be like Moses and Aaron and be equipped with miracles to prove ourselves to the world, to prove that our Christian faith is in fact the correct one? Imagine what it would be like, to be the agent through whom God unleashes ten devastating plagues and brings an empire to its knees. Imagine what you could accomplish if you could go to Washington and threaten to turn all the Great Lakes into blood or drape the 48 states under a blanket of inky, black darkness.

Wouldn't that give us Lutheran Christians a big advantage? God hasn't set things up for us that way. On the other hand, did you know you are actually better equipped than Moses and Aaron to further the Kingdom of God? We New Testament believers,

we Christians today, are better equipped to set people free. Let's ponder this truth as we examine this account of Moses and Aaron in Exodus 7: We are better equipped to set people free.

First, it's important to affirm that the account of Moses and Aaron in the Old Testament is not myth or fable, not just a nice story. It is historical fact, including the miracles. The Jewish people had been living for 400 years in the land of Goshen which was part of Egyptian territory. During that time they grew quite populous. Their number increased so much so that the ruler or Pharaoh of Egypt was concerned that by sheer numbers the Jews could mount a revolution and topple Egyptian power. So the Egyptians attempted to suppress the Jews by enslaving them to hard labor.

God had promised the Savior of the world would come from the Jewish people. In His ongoing purpose to preserve this people for the coming of the Savior God determined to rescue them from slavery in Egypt and lead them to the promised land of Canaan. He appointed Moses and Aaron to facilitate this grand upheaval.

The account of the staff turning into a snake is really just the beginning, the first pebble to start the avalanche. It happened as Moses and Aaron had only begun their negotiations with Pharoah. God had graciously granted them this miracle as a sign to verify that they were legit and not kooks.

If Moses and Aaron were hoping that the miracle would make an impression on Pharoah, however, they would be disappointed. Listen as I read this account once again, *So Moses and Aaron went to Pharoah and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said.*

Satan can mimic miracles of God to some small degree, but only mimic, and only insofar as God allows. But the most striking detail is even after

Aaron's snake swallowed up the others, Pharoah was not impressed. God had foretold that Pharoah's heart would become even more hardened than it was.

If we could do miracles in the name of Christianity or in the name of Peace Lutheran Church would the world, would the citizens of Sun Prairie be impressed? Some might be curious. Many would dismiss it as a trick. Some might go so far as to investigate. But in truth, no one would come to faith in Jesus as their Savior. No one's heart would change. No one would find peace with God. Not as the result of a miraculous sign. Not even when Jesus Himself walked the earth and countless miracles poured out from him day after day -no one came to faith as a result of the miracles themselves.

Jesus even went so far as to instruct His own believers not to be too impressed with miracles in these final days of the earth. He said, *Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you."*

Moses and Aaron served God's purpose and did what was necessary to cripple the power of Egypt in order to set the Jewish people free. God equipped them in a unique way for that particular task. But you and I are better equipped to set people free, free in a permanent way. Free from guilt. Free from sin's grip. Free from death. Free from judgement. Free from all demons. Free from the dread of being trapped in impossible circumstances.

Moses and Aaron proclaimed a Christ who was yet to come. We have the advantage of proclaiming a Christ who has already come, has already died on the cross, has already risen from the dead. We get to see it and proclaim it as an accomplished fact. We are able to see the fulfillment of all God's promises in Christ and take in the full revelation of His salvation plan.

Christ has equipped you with that power -the power to set people free. Christ has equipped you not with miracles, but with the Gospel to set people free. Like when you see the shattered look on your 16-year-old's face and you take her face into your hands and

say, "Sweetheart, your sins are forgiven! God still loves you and so do we!" Like when you're sitting by your grandmother's bed and death is crouching in the room and you read to her the story of Lazarus and how Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live even though he dies." Like when you are driving your best friend to rehab for the fourth time and he asks why you are still doing this when he has proved such a lost cause and you tell him, "Because God is a God of second chances. And third and fourth." And you remind him that God's mercies are new every morning. Like when your brother suffers a minor stroke and as a result is not capable of maintaining his current employment, but he wasn't ready to retire yet. What will he do? Who will hire him like this? And you suggest, "Start by taking the Lord's Supper this Sunday. Start with the assurance that Christ's victory belongs to you too and that God is not at odds with you. He is working all things out to bless you."

The apostle Paul wrote that the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. A miracle will not cause someone to believe in Jesus

and be saved. But the Gospel will. The Gospel has such power because God the Holy Spirit works through the Gospel. Through the Gospel He changes hearts and enlightens minds, He creates trust, He heals and restores, He inspires peace, He gives new life, produces fruits of faith and saves from death.

In the reading from Exodus 7 only Moses and Aaron were authorized to perform a miracle in the presence of Pharaoh. But today Christ has authorized every believer, from the lisping toddler to the sage grandparent, to wield the Gospel to set people free. And Christ has promised to back the Gospel with His Spirit's power.

God equipped Moses and Aaron to change the course of history and preserve the people who would be the family of the promised Messiah. But God has equipped you and me to have an even more permanent, everlasting impact on the lives of friends, family and people around us. On the Last Day, when we see the vast throng robed in white and standing before the throne of Christ, the sight will overwhelm us as we will then see clearly that

the power of the Gospel was the greatest miracle of all.