

Our reading from Exodus 19, verse 8: **“All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.”** 1. (oops!) The elders were pretty naive when they promised to follow God.

Much like a child who promised if she got a puppy she would take care of it, the Israelites didn't know what they were getting themselves into. We sometimes make fun of the pharisees in the New Testament for being legalistic, and we talk about the 613 rules they followed. However, those 613 rules aren't made up rules, those were 613 rules drawn from the Bible itself. We see the elders of the people promise that they'll do all the Lord has spoken. All 613 things described in the Law of Moses.

Indeed, it started out with the best intentions, the Lord promised: **“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”**”” But if we play back the tape, 2. (ugh!) They weren't much of a holy nation of priests.

To be a holy nation of priests was to be a shining beacon of people who lived in a different way than the rest of the world, and the vision was to have the nations come to Jerusalem to learn who the true God was, and how to live rightly. Many of the nations had statues of gold and stone to depict what their gods were like. The Lord was going to do even better: the people of Israel would be living statues and depictions of His love for and attitude toward all of humanity.

To be certain, they had a temple that was marvelous, and before that, they had a tabernacle which was a traveling temple. They did things way differently than the nations around them: they had dietary laws, they had an exclusivity contract with worshipping one God, and all sorts of other rules.

To be certain, there were success stories: victorious military campaigns, foreigners such as Ruth and Rahab grafted in, and missionary outreach such as Jonah's trip to Nineveh.

But in many ways, they failed. Already in the upcoming chapters and verses they complain to God. They wish they never left Egypt. They make a golden statue of a calf. Men are stoned to death for stealing. Men are executed for blaspheming the name of God. All that the Lord has spoken we will do?

Time does not permit to give you a play by play of all the follies of the Old Testament people, but in short, they followed the way of the nations around them, bowing down to lifeless statues of gold and bronze and becoming lifeless like them rather than being that holy nation of priests. For this disobedience, the Lord sent them into exile.

In the New Testament, Peter continues this theme: **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that**

you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Maybe we wonder the same: some nation of priests we are!

Just like the Israelites were called to be walking statues of the Lord God, we are called to be little Christs to those around us. Yet we live in a society where Christians often don't seem much different than non-Christians. The Church itself is rocked by schisms, scandals, and selfishness.

We need look no further than the mirror. We cannot keep the ten commandments, and we always know we could do better. We fail to be that walking demonstration of Christ's love. On this Father's day, we dads look back and wonder if we could have done a better job or could be doing a better job caring for our children and family.

If we know what God demands of us, and we see how we've done, we might start to wonder if we are that nation of priests, if we are truly Christian.

But it is important to realize, 3. (aha!) It was the Lord who brought us in. How does the Lord start His speech to Moses? “**You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.**” We need to remember how the story started. In our text for today, the Lord speaks to Moses in Sinai after the Lord had rescued the people from slavery in Egypt.

They didn't send the ten plagues upon Egypt, it was God. They didn't guide themselves out of Egypt, it was God by the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire. They didn't part the Red Sea, it was by the Almighty power of the Lord God. The Lord God rescued them! **THE LORD DELIVERS AND WE BELIEVE.**

4. (whee!) God's people are called to hear His voice and echo back. So too, it was not anything we did to earn our place in God's kingdom. Jesus Christ did everything for us. He lived the perfect life. He took your sins to Calvary. He faced the punishment you deserve. He rose again from the dead. The Israelites had the Passover and Exodus from Egypt to mark as the great sign of the Lord's salvation. For us, the cross and the empty tomb are the Lord's signs of His favor and His love for us.

As you consider your life, many of you were brought to the baptismal font as a baby. You didn't choose that. Your parents took you to church week after week, and dad didn't have a family meeting where you voted on whether you to go to church or not. Even if you came to faith as an adult, we must understand that it was the Holy Spirit who brought you to faith. Yes, it may be you getting showered, dressed, and ready for Church in the morning, but it is the Holy Spirit who pushes you out the door.

With that being said, we need to understand that our role as Christians is not first of all to earn our priesthood in God's kingdom through our obedience. It is not

given for us to be understanders. Christianity is not a puzzle to be solved or a set of facts to be comprehended. Rather, our place in God's kingdom is that of echoers.

In our text from Exodus, the Lord commands His people to obey His voice and keep His covenant. The people echo back, "**All that the LORD has spoken we will do.**" Jesus is calling us to listen to His Word and say it back to Him. He is calling us to be echoers. That's what we do when we confess the Christian faith in the service in the creeds. We are saying back to God what He knows to be true.

And so, it comes as no surprise that we confessed at the beginning of this service that we are poor, miserable sinners, because that's who we are. We came here today unable to keep the ten commandments completely and unable to be that example of Christ to others. Thank God that our place in the kingdom is not based on our ability to keep these commandments perfectly.

But at the same time, we heard those words that we are forgiven. That the Lord has forgiven us on behalf of Christ, and we are given a new start week by week, day by day. Sometimes it may be hard to believe, but we simply trust that we are still God's treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

We confess that Jesus is true God and true Man. We confess that He forgives us. We confess the Holy Trinity. We confess the true presence of Christ's body and blood in with and under bread and wine. We confess that baptism now saves us. We echo all these things back, maybe not understanding them, but trusting that the Lord who created the heavens and the earth can figure out the details.

All this to say, it still matters how we live, but lifestyle flows from belief. 5. (yeah!) As we echo back, we serve as the priests. As we confess the faith and say the same things that God has given us to say in the Bible, we find that the Holy Spirit is working in our hearts to shape us into Christian men and women. Because our place in the kingdom has already been won by our Lord and Savior, we need not fret and wonder if we've done enough to earn the name Christian. It has simply been given us and we're part of God's family.

On this Father's day, we can celebrate our dads, who yes, are imperfect, but in many cases, are the ones who taught us the faith and taught us to echo back what the Lord has taught him through His Word. They took care of us and helped raise us and let us know we belong, even when we failed to do what we were commanded. Fathers, rest easy, the imperfections staring back at you in the mirror have been covered and bought with the blood of the Lamb whose Heavenly Father counts no sins against you.

Whoever you are today, father or son, mother or daughter, rest easy, and know that the Lord has carried you on eagles wings through His Son Jesus, and He is filling your mouth with words to echo back to those around you, and as He fills your lips, He moves your hands and feet to follow, even if it is imperfect this side of heaven. Amen!