



# One Page Sermon

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#### Exodus 16:1-18 God provides manna in the

A conversation I had with Sarah Augustine a couple of weeks ago will forever change the way I think about the story of Exodus. It is the story of a slave-people escaping from bondage and coming to the precipice of the Promised Land. It is a story of the Hebrews—a band of outsiders, mercenaries, servants, and slaves—growing into their identity as Israel, God’s people.

Sarah Augustine has native American roots. She is an author and activist for indigenous peoples in the United States, Central America, and everywhere. I had the chance to talk with her about her book *The Land is Not Empty: Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery*. When we were talking about Exodus, she forever changed my perspective on the story by saying, “My people were the Canaanites.” Exodus is a story of escape, but it is also the story of occupation. It is a story of liberation and empowerment, but the land the Israelites went to was no more empty than the land that European settlers found in the Americas.

For far too long, the story of Exodus has been used as a mandate for occupation, invasion, and even genocide. Many described the occupation of North America in Biblical terms, calling it “Manifest Destiny” for the United States to cover the land from coast to coast. The history of relations between the United States and indigenous people on this land is a story of tragedy and broken promises. As Augustine said in our conversation, “My people were robbed of everything and given nothing in return.”

So when she reads the story of Exodus, she reads it differently than I ever have. She holds the story of liberation in tension with the story of invasion and occupation. And she remembers the roots of liberation came from a violent act generations before the slavery began.

She reminded me that Joseph is the one who helped Pharaoh gain power. By the time we read about Pharaoh in Exodus, he is the most powerful man in the world, but centuries earlier, Joseph helped him amass a fortune. Joseph was only in Egypt as a slave himself because of the violent act of his brothers, who sold him to travelers in order to be rid of him. This heinous act of violence against Joseph led to a string of events that ended with Joseph advising the Pharaoh how to gain great wealth through a time of famine.



It was Joseph’s plan of hoarding, buying up fields of those who were struggling, and selling hoarded grain at exorbitant prices during the famine that led to Pharaoh’s great generational wealth.

Four centuries after Joseph, his people were now slaves building what? Store houses to continue the Pharaoh’s grip on an economy based on scarcity. The story of Exodus is the story of Pharaoh unable to hear the cries of the Hebrews, unable to hear the voice of God in Moses, and unwilling to release his grip on what he held. And it is the story of God who hears the cries of God’s people and responds with giving them freedom and providing an abundance of bread and meat. Pharaoh does not listen and is unwilling to let go. God hears and lets food rain down in abundance.

Yet how do the people respond? When God tells them to collect only enough bread for the day, and not collect any on the Sabbath, they immediately try to hoard. They are given enough, but they want more. God freed them from Egypt, where they were slaves building Pharaoh’s storehouses, and as soon as they had freedom they tried to fill their own storehouses.

The violence that began with jealousy amongst Joseph’s brothers starts a cycle that leads to Pharaoh’s power. Once free, the people then emulate the greed that fueled Pharaoh’s power. These are the cycles and systems in which we are still trapped. The story of Joseph’s forgiveness is also the story of Pharaoh’s rise to power. The story of liberation is also the story of violent occupation.

As a people of God, we are called to end these cycles. Be satisfied with enough. End cycles of violence that begets violence. Stop living in a world of scarcity and fear and instead embrace God’s abundance and generosity.