

The Tenth Part in the Series
Exodus: Let My People Go!
“Against All Odds!”

If you buy a lottery ticket, what are the odds that you will win a multi-state power-ball lottery? One in 185 million. If you play baseball in high school, what are the odds of playing in the major leagues? One in 6,600. Those are the same odds of someone guessing your four-digit PIN on the first try. What are the odds that you will be struck by lightning? One in three million. By the way, a man named Roy Sullivan holds the world record for being struck by lightning. Roy has been struck seven times. He has no more hair and answers to the name Matilda!

The most important “what are the odds” question, though, is this. What are the odds that a man, brutally beaten and then crucified by the Roman Empire, would come back to life? The odds are astronomical, but—it happened! It really happened! *Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!*

The goal of this sermon is for us to **profess** Easter and to **possess** Easter. Easter happened. That’s **profess**. Easter is happening *in* me. That’s **possess!**

Today we wrap up our sermon series on the book of Exodus. We come to Exodus 15. What are the odds that a group of Israelite state slaves would defeat the most powerful military force on earth—the Egyptians led by that mean and mighty Pharaoh?

The drama begins in Exodus 1:11, “The Egyptians put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor who worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields.”

It gets worse! “No longer supply the people with straw for making bricks, let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don’t reduce the quota” (Ex 5:7–8). Pharaoh is using bricks, whips, and his best tricks!

But it gets worse! As the Israelites flee Egypt they look over their shoulders and see Pharaoh madly chasing after them screaming, “You’ll have hell to pay!”

But it gets even worse! The Israelites become surrounded and stuck on all sides. Exodus 14:11, “They said to Moses, ‘Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?’”

Just when the odds were completely against Israel we come to Exodus 15:4–5, “Pharaoh’s chariots and army he has hurled into the sea. The finest of

Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea." No wonder Israelites sing in Exodus 15:2, "The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation!" This is the first Hallelujah! Then Exodus 15:3, "Yahweh is a Man of War. Yahweh is his name!" All of this, though, is just a peek, a prelude, and a preview into the Bible's greatest against all the odds story.

Opposition began early in Christ's ministry. Pharisees plot with Herodians. Detractors say he's demon possessed. Scribes test Him with Old Testament Torah trivia. His brothers ride and ridicule Him. Sadducees posture with pride. *It gets worse*. Christ will have hell to pay!

Once arrested, Jesus is bound, accused, blindfolded, and mocked. *But it gets worse*. They strip Him naked and beat Him into a bloody pulp. *But it gets even worse*. Jesus is blood-soaked and spiked to a tree for six hours. He is crucified, dead, and buried.

Just when everyone thought it was all over, the angel announced, "He is not here! He has risen just as he said!" Mary shouts, "Rabboni!" Then Thomas for the ages, "My Lord and my God!" *Against all the odds, Jesus lives! Hallelujah!*

The goal of this sermon is for us to *profess* Easter and to *possess* Easter. Easter happened. That's profess. Easter is happening *in* me. That's possess! There are at least three barriers to us possessing Easter.

Maybe we grew up in a family that didn't work. Sometimes I run into people and they're walking zombies because when they were children something was broken inside. Now they're a third or halfway through life and they're starting to think that what's broken will never be fixed. What was lost will never be found.

I'm talking about the 1 in 3 people whose parents got divorced. I'm talking about the 1 in 4 women who were abused in unspeakable ways as children. I'm talking about the 1 in 7 people who grew up with an alcoholic parent. I'm talking about the people who grew up in families with absentee dads, controlling moms, screaming parents, and abusive siblings. You feel as though the odds are against you.

Maybe we experienced a devastating loss. For some of you, this means your spouse died, your marriage died, your child died, or your father died. For others, it means your *dream* died. And I'd venture to guess that for some of you your will to live has died. Most days it feels as though Mt. Everest is sitting on your chest, crushing what's left of your life. You feel as though the odds are against you.

Maybe we are crippled by a destructive habit. What is it for you? Gambling? Drugs? Alcohol? Pornography? Work? You're stuck in a vicious cycle. You can't shake free. You feel as though the odds are against you.

All the odds were against a man named Lee Capps. Lee, who didn't know how to fly, took off in a private plane with a friend who was a pilot. When they got up to cruising altitude Lee's friend, the pilot, had a heart attack and died.

Lee grabbed the radio and cried for help. An air traffic controller in Renton, Washington, heard Lee's cry. He said, "This is your lucky day. I'm not only an air traffic controller, I'm also a flight instructor. Would you be interested in a flying lesson?" Being otherwise unoccupied, Lee Capps said, "Sure! Why not?" The air traffic controller said, "Lee, you're going to have to take a shot at landing the plane. No practice, no dress rehearsal, no spring training!"

Lee Capps came in like a drunk duck, very wobbly. He was all over the place. And he hit the ground pretty hard. But Lee Capps walked away from it all with only a few minor cuts. Afterwards, the air traffic controller was interviewed by several TV stations, "Did you really think he would walk away alive?" The air traffic controller responded, "Folks, Lee Capps made it against all odds!"

I know. Believe me, I know. Stuff is going on—a whole lot of stuff is going on in your life. You're circling the runway and trying to land. Your greatest fear is that you will crash and burn!

Let me remind you of two honest-to-God facts. Against all odds, Israel made it out of Egypt. Better yet, against all odds, Jesus Christ is risen today! We **profess** Easter with every ounce of our being! But, most certainly we also long to **possess** Easter with every ounce of our being!

Paul says we can! "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you" (Rom 8:11) Through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, Easter can happen *in* us. God promises resurrection for everything that looks so lifeless, so hopeless, so dead! Ask the Holy Spirit to make all of this real for you.

In John 14:19 Jesus puts it this way, "Because I live, you also will live." Easter happened. That's **profess**. Easter is happening *in* me. That's **possess**. We live now and we will live forever. We have a word for all of this. What would that be? **Hallelujah!** Amen.