THE GOD WHO SAVES E1 | NOVEMBER 15 2026 | JONATHAN SHANKS

Who Splits the Sea

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

11th Hour Basketball Shot. A shot that came through at the last available second. As followers of Jesus, we serve and worship the God of the 11th Hour.

Would you agree? A God who cannot be pleased without faith, and who for reasons that are not completely clear to us, chooses to answer prayer regularly at the last available second. Again, does anyone agree?

The learned experience and testimony of so many of us in the room is that our God is the God Who Saves. We're starting a new series called The God Who Saves. Let me pray.

Father God, we thank you for this day and for your word and this great story of rescue where you opened the Red Sea. And I pray that Lord, we might be encouraged today.

And in this story from the Old Testament, we might see Jesus and all that he has done for us.

And that we might lift our eyes to him, our hearts to him, our voices to him in praise and acknowledge him as the saviour of the world. I pray you to help me now in Jesus name. Amen.

The God who created the universe saves people. He is a rescuer. And as I just prayed, he does this saving ultimately through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we're kicking off a three week series. We're having a break from our working through every book of the Bible in our big series that we've been teaching.

But today, we're looking at the classic saving story of the Old Testament when God opened up the Red Sea and in so doing, extracted what we are going to call 11th hour faith. 11th hour faith.

This is the God who saves part one, 11th hour faith. The story of the Exodus where the people of Israel were saved from Egypt has been called, rightly, the controlling narrative of the Bible.

It's the big story that gets played out again and again and again. God comes and rescues people typically at the last moment, at the 11th hour. And it's a story that we can relate to today, I'm sure.

It was a moving experience for me. Maybe 15 years ago, I was in that part of the world. And we traveled from Cairo around the path of the Sinai Peninsula where the people of Israel would have walked.

And we came to, you don't know where exactly the point on the Red Sea was, but we came to a point on the edge of the Red Sea, and it certainly felt like you're between a rock and a hard place or a desert

rock and the water. It was like nowhere else to go. And we sort of had that sense of fear and hopelessness that the people of Israel would have had.

After 430 years of slavery, God says in Exodus chapter 3, the Lord said, I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt.

I have heard them crying because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them.

And then if you go on to read the story of God rescuing them, we read about plagues and the battle God has with a stubborn and arrogant Egyptian pharaoh, finally culminating in the pharaoh relenting after the

angel of death has passed over his land, killing the first born. Exodus 12, 31 says, During the night, pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron, and said, Up, leave my people, you and the Israelites.

Go worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds as you have said, and go. And also, bless me.

The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country, for otherwise, they said, we will all die. So, the Israelites, probably about 600,000 men at the time, and then plus women and children, leave Egypt.

They travel all the way around, as I said, the Sinai Peninsula, until they come to this large area of beach, at the end of the line, on the edge of the Red Sea.

And this is where we read what Gary read for us. Let me read again, from Exodus 14. As pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians marching after them.

They were terrified, and cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?

Didn't we say to you in Egypt, Leave us alone, let us serve the Egyptians? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than to die in the desert.

They had really lost heart, hadn't they, over the 400 years. Moses answered the people, Do not be afraid, stand firm, and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.

The Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you. You need only to be still.

You get the picture, you get the picture. Many weeks of travel that the people have walked and they come to a dead end and their captors are closing in on them and there is no hope left.

If there are 12 hours to get done, what needs to be done? It's the 11th hour. It's the 11th hour.

And it's the last part of the 11th hour and that part's slipping away. And Moses calmly says, relax, God's in charge. Now zoom forward 3000 years and put yourself in the picture.

And we know what that's like, don't we? Does anyone know what it's like? You've had a scan or someone you love's had a scan and you're waiting to find out what life's gonna be like in the future.

You've brought your dream to God and it's coming to the pointy end. It's coming to the end of the line.

It's like, God, you've gotta do something because the opportunity to live out my dream is about to slip through my fingers. Do we know what that's like? It's stressful, isn't it?

It's heartbreaking at times. It's terrifying at times. Waiting on God.

Waiting on God. Can I ask, who would agree, if you raise your hand, that he is the God of the 11th hour? A lot of us.

A lot of us, not everybody. So, praise God, God answers prayers early sometimes. I pastored at a couple of churches before coming here.

In the last church we were at, we were in the Sutherland Shire and we had sold our property, this dilapidated big red building, a bit like our one here at Hornsby.

And we'd sold it to developers and there was a great exciting future, but it sort of had to happen. We really needed to sell for this next season to be ushered in. And we had been given 1% by the developer.

And I think it was about a year we were waiting for, the moment that they would give 10% in exchange. The contracts would exchange. And then they'd be locked in pretty much.

There's a lot of money involved, and then we would wait for settlement. And we were just pinning our hopes on this.

And I was the pastor there, and I remember waiting, and the exchange was meant to happen before 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

And I don't know if exchanges always happen at the last minute, but my experience of it was it was quite stressful because we were waiting on the administrator to call me in my office to say, they've exchanged.

The Red Sea has opened. We've got a new hope, a new beginning. It's going to happen.

And I'm just stressing, biting my fingernails, and it's 5 to 5. I'm thinking, why do you have to wait till 5 to 5? It's 5.

It's the cutoff. And then it gets to 5, and it gets to 5 past 10 past 5. And then I'm like, it hasn't happened.

And then the phone rings, and it's the administrator. And she says, they've exchanged. They've exchanged.

Why does God have to do that? Why? The God of the 11th hour.

God said to Moses, why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on.

Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.

I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen.

The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen.

God doesn't have to be the God of the 11th hour. He could be the God of the 4th hour. You know, there's 12 hours in the day and he's like, he always turns up about halfway through.

Just after a few prayers. It could be the 8th hour. But so frequently, it's the 11th hour.

Why? Why would he be the God of the 11th hour? I think there's something in the fact that the Bible says in Hebrews, we cannot please God without faith.

Faith provides us a framework for living. When you require faith, you are in a posture of dependence on God, aren't we? No faith, no posture of dependence.

Out of control, out of the comfort zone, we need faith. We need a relationship with God. That's the key.

We need a relationship with God where faith can exist. I would put it to you that God is all about relationship. He's Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever.

Trinity, He's a community of oneness. Relationship is key. It's everything for Him.

And He wants relationship with us. He wants to be with us. That's the story of the Bible.

He wants our heart in that relationship. He wants our affections. His desire is to be with us.

And faith is the best means by which He can share His life with us in relationship. There's a lot of words there, but just think about it. How does faith work in relationship?

It needs relationship. We need to know someone to trust, to have faith, to step out and know, believe, and hope that they will come through with what we need.

God loves faith because He knows what it does to human beings. It actually reduces their stress levels. Faith fills up, it doesn't empty.

Faith strengthens, it doesn't weaken. Faith centers, it inspires others, and it breeds more faith. So, the Israelites are standing on mass in front of this body of water.

Interestingly, if you understand the Hebrew picture of water, water is just not a bunch of liquid. Water in the Old Testament represented the underworld.

The water, the big bodies of water, they represented the spiritual abode of the dead. It was where the demons supposedly emerged from. It was a scary place, big large bodies of water.

The Sea of Galilee was angry when it was going off with big winds, but it was doubly scary because it had a spiritual component as well.

So, it's no coincidence that in some of the stories, one in particular in the New Testament, Jesus sends the demons out of the pigs into the water because that's where demons belonged.

The sea represents all the big, bad, shadowy, scary things that have dominion over us. The big nasty imaginary endings to our situations. The 4 a.m.

stuff that you think about when you wake up. The sea represents those things that keep us awake. There's a reason why they call the Exodus from Egypt through the Red Sea, the controlling narrative.

Because we can all relate to it, I think. When you think of the sea as that scary place of the unknown that keeps us up at night, we can all relate to that, I think.

The seas of doubt, of pain, of challenge, of fear, of unforgiveness, of pride, of rebellion, of sin, the challenges that we need to cross.

Jesus comes that in the New Testament with a word, because He's bigger than the stormy sea. Amen? That's why we have these stories in the New Testament that remind us the sea is filled with creatures.

Jesus tells the disciples to throw their nets over different sides of the boat, because He controls the sea.

He knows which fish, if you know your New Testament at all, He knows which fish to send the disciples to to find a one drachma coin in the mouth of.

So, you find yourself on the beach, at your own Red Sea experience, and there's no where to turn. It's just a mass of scary water in front of you.

And so, you and I, we put our faith in the one who is bigger than the sea, and is bigger than the enemy behind.

You believe you have faith, because we know you can't please God without faith, so we have faith. But I want to ask this, the question that begs to be asked is, faith for what? Faith for what?

You're at that point where you need deliverance. Faith for what? Faith in the 11th-hour God?

Who said that he had to act before the 12th hour? When did he say that he would act before the 12th hour? When did he say that he would always come through and open up that sea before us?

Our expectations of God and his responses to our requests is a curious thing to think about. In Matthew 11, do you know the story at all?

John the Baptist is serving God, and he's hoping that Jesus is the Messiah, and he's been put in prison.

And he sends some of his friends, John the Baptist who's in prison, sends some friends of his disciples to go and ask Jesus, are you actually the Messiah? Am I gonna, is the sea gonna open up?

I'm in jail, Herod's put me in jail. It's not looking good. Am I gonna get out here?

And, because I know you're the God of the 11th hour. And Jesus' response to John's disciples about his future is John's amazing. John the Baptist, he's just an amazing guy.

In the kingdom of God, there's barely anyone more important than him. But the sea won't open up for you like you hope.

And so, John the Baptist, who's praying for the 11th hour God to come through, he has his head chopped off.

And so, it's one of those weird stories where you sort of think, where is the God of the 11th hour for him? The phrase of the 11th hour comes from Matthew 20, and the work is in the vineyard.

And the fact that some will be hired between 5 and 6 o'clock, towards, some work from 6 in the morning, and some work right at the very end at the 11th hour before sunset. That's the idea.

Jesus says, this is eternal life, that you may know God and the One Whom He sent. Jesus says, life is about relationship. And this is the point I think I want to make in the whole sermon.

What if life is more about relationship than having our prayer answered to get through what we think we need to get through? What if God does often answer those prayers? Often, he does it at the last moment.

But whether he answers the prayer like we hope he would or not, he wants relationship, amen? That's what he wants.

And so faith, which emerges in us when we're waiting in that stressful space, it pushes us to relationship with God, and that's what he's after.

So he may not answer our prayer exactly like we hope, but hopefully we have found him, amen? That's the point. And it's profound if you can get a hold of it.

Red seas just don't always open up. As a pastor, I don't know how many people with life-threatening diseases I've prayed for in 30-something years, and a lot of them, a lot of them have died.

And I think, Lord, where is the God of the red sea opening up? But if they know Jesus in particular and they're going to live forever, I think, oh, well, He did really open up the red sea. That's for sure.

When Jim Elliott, Nate St., Ed McCully, Peter Fleming, and Roger Euderian, in 1956, after years of prayer and moving strategically towards reaching the Wirrani people, after years of preparation, when they stood on

the river beach, having flown in there, they were trying to reach these people with the gospel. As they stood there and watched the arrows go into the first men next to them's chest, and they thought, this isn’t good. This can't be good. And they're all martyred. The five of them, they had given everything.

These young men, I think they were all in their twenties. They went to reach this unreached people group. It's like this prayer, Lord God, open up the Red Sea.

The controlling narrative is you're the God who saves these people, the Wiranis.

They don't know you, the living God and your son, Jesus Christ, who has saved them, died on the cross for them and risen from the grave. But they went to them and they were slaughtered.

What on earth is God doing? But within a very short time, what happened? Do you remember?

What did their wives do? Their wives went to them. And the wives shared the gospel, and the tribe came to Christ.

And we might think, why would five people have to die? We don't know the answer to that other than the cross is how God does things. He opened up a way, even though they thought that the sea had remained shut.

God wants what the eleventh hour brings, dependence, acute attention, reliance, passion, worship, self-sacrifice, faith.

We put faith in Christ, and then as Harriet has done, the New Testament teaches that we go through the waters of baptism, and it is connected to the Red Sea.

The people of God are putting their trust in the living God, and they go through this Red Sea experience to get to the Promised Land. And that's something like baptism.

When we put our faith in Christ, we follow the example of the New Testament saints, and we get baptised by immersion to say, my whole life belongs to you, Lord God.

The old me has died, and the new me has come alive. Isn't that just a wonderful picture? Harriet coming up here, and that's what's happened by faith to her.

She died to the old her, buried under the ground, and came out fresh. This happened by faith, not because of the water being holy, but that is an amazing thing.

It's a declaration of solidarity with Christians all over the world to say, I have been saved, rescued, redeemed, the sea has opened up by God's grace, and I'm hoisting a flag in my baptism saying,

I'm a believer. In fact, we say, I have been ruined for this world. As Hebrews 11 says, the world was not worthy of the heroes of faith. I have died so that Christ might live in me.

That's the picture of baptism, and it's the picture of the people of God moving through the Red Sea.

11th hour faith, it's what we're called to live for the whole 24. Amen? How about you?

Are you waiting in the 11th hour? Are you waiting in the 11th hour? Well, as one 11th hour waiter to another, be strong and courageous.

Do not be discouraged. We can rely on our Heavenly Father. He will not let us down.

He's had all of eternity to work out how you're going to get out of this one. He's the God Who Saves. He is the God Who Saves.

I hope you have put your faith in the God Who Saves, who saves us through Jesus Christ, dying for our sin in our place. He took what we deserved. We deserve judgment.

He took it. So that we, by faith, could receive what he deserved, a perfect, righteous relationship with God.

If you have been saved by the God Who Saves, and haven't been baptised to publicly declare this truth, if you have sat there before a few minutes ago and watched Harriet go under and come up like every Christian

looking like a drowned rat, you know God does that for a reason, keeps us all humble. No one looks like they did in the mirror this morning after they're baptised. They look way better. Humbled.

If you saw that and thought, you know what, I should get baptised sometime, because you know I put my faith in Christ, and I've never been baptised, just sort of never got round to it.

We actually have clothes for you right now.

There's underpants, there's a towel, there's clothing that you can actually walk out there and come up and meet me in that pool and declare, I believe Jesus Christ loved me, died for me and rose again.

And I want to testify publicly in the waters of baptism. I have been saved. I got to a point in my life that I couldn't save myself just like the people of Israel.

And the God who made me opened up the sea and led me through. Baptism declares, I am washed clean and I have been set free.

A couple of dozen people in the last few years have spontaneously responded and had baptism, so it works. You won't have a clothing blowout or anything.

But let me pray, and I want to really encourage you to consider testifying that you are a person that has experienced the powerful love of God and His saving grace.

If that's you, would you consider joining me in that baptismal pool? And you don't have to have a big testimony, just, I believe Jesus died and rose again for me.

And we will baptise you, and you will join the hosts of those who follow Jesus, who have been baptised as believers through the waters. Let me pray, and I hope you'll consider.

Lord God, we just want to honour you as the God Who Saves. We honour you as the God Who opened up the Red Sea.

We honour you as the God Who is trustworthy now for those of us who are right in that tricky spot on the edge of the Red Sea, and we cannot make it through.

For those who are blessed at the moment, knowing the truth, some of us think that we can get our way through in our own strength, but others are blessed to know that they can't.

And so I pray, Lord God, for those people here today that know they could only make it through by your power. I pray that you would grant them the 11th hour miracle they ask.

And as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the Old Testament said, even if you don't do that, may we still praise you. We want to acknowledge that you're good no matter what.

That you have a bigger perspective than any of us. You are good. And we can trust you.

You are the God Who saves. And so I pray that you would prompt whoever you want, now to come courageously and be baptised for your glory, Jesus. Amen.