

EXODUS 1:8 - 2:10

GOD
WORKS
THROUGH
CRACKS

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Scripture Passage

Exodus 1:8-2:10

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, "When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months.

When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Sermon

God Works Through Cracks

Today, I would like to reflect on Moses. Moses was the man who actually created the history of Israel. Through him, Israel became Israel. He was the one who liberated Israelites from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. Israelites started with one family but he was the one who made a nation out of scattered people and gave them the identity. He gave them the law, he gave them the system so that the Israelites became a country through Moses. Today we hear the story of Moses's birth. He was not born in a good time. It was a very dangerous and perilous time.

The Insecurity of the Pharaoh

Thanks to Joseph, Jacob's family enjoyed the abundance and comfort in Goshen, Egypt. But as you know, nothing stays the same. Time flows. As time flows, everything changes. The Scripture said, *"Then Joseph died, and all his brothers, and that whole generation. But the Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them."* (Exodus 1:6, 7)

Nothing stays the same. As time flows and changes, our situations and our circumstances change. The beginning of the problems started when a king who didn't know Joseph arose over Egypt. This king, unfortunately, was a very insecure king. Insecurity of people causes so many problems. We know how insecurity affects not only themselves, but also other people. But when power is given to the insecure people, it becomes dangerous because they can be abusive. When you observe insecure people, what do they live by? They live by fear. They live constantly with fear. They see everything as a threat. This king was very much like that. He saw Israelites getting stronger and saw that as a threat.

We all have fear. We all live with fear. But if we have confidence and courage, we can deal with our fear appropriately and creatively. This king did not have either courage or confidence. All he knew was to suppress those who were challenges to him. He oppressed the people he was afraid of. He crushed them with his raw power. That is what insecure people do. They always have to put down others to feel safe. Because he had no courage, he could not have the wisdom to deal with life situations.

Wisdom comes from love and courage, and this person lacked both. We cannot solve our life problems in that way. *“But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites.”* (Exodus 1:12). The problem could not be solved by oppressing them.

A Tumultuous Time

Then he did the horrible things to the Israelites. *“The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ‘When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.’”* (Exodus 1:15, 16). Torturing them with hard labour was not enough. He had to kill off the male children. He committed violence and murder. This is a typical trend: fear brings anger, anger violence, and violence killing. One person’s insecurity brought so much sorrow in the world. It’s incredible how one person can bring so much sadness, tragedy, and sorrow in people.

Moses was born in this kind of tumultuous time. But behind Moses’s birth, there were courageous women who were very different from Pharaoh. They were all women.

Shiphrah and Puah

The first women were midwives. Their names were Shiphrah and Puah. I want to say their names. Their names need to be remembered. The Scripture says their names. They were courageous women. Because of what they did, they could have been put to death. But they risked their lives because they loved the life of others. They respected and honored the dignity of human life. It is important to respect the life of others. Because we don't have the respect for the life of others, sometimes we do inhuman things to each other. We insult them, we put them down, we do all kinds of terrible things to others because we don't have that kind of respect for the life of others.

The more we get to know Jesus, the more we realize how much he loved the life of others. As the children beautifully sang, "Jesus loves me this I know". He didn't see sinners as sinners. Jesus saw sinners as precious life. And he sacrificed for them. The sacrifice of the cross came from Jesus's love for the life of others. Because these midwives loved and respected the life of others, they could be courageous to even risk their lives to save life. The first incidence of civil disobedience you see. God blessed them.

Jochebed

The next woman was Moses's mother, Jochebed. After Moses was born, she didn't have a single day she could sleep comfortably for three months. As it is, it is really hard to sleep when you have a baby but in her case, she had to be extra careful not to get caught. Whenever her baby cried, she became very nervous. But how can she stop a baby from crying? That's who babies are. And the sound of a crying baby at night travels far. If she got caught, not only his life but also her life would have been in danger. But to her, her life was not as important. It was important but compared to the life of her son, she didn't really care about her life. All she wanted was to save her child. That is the heart of a mother. Risking her own life to save her child.

There is courage in the mother who tries to save her loving child. From that courage, comes wisdom. And wisdom came to this woman, the mother Jochebed. She put her son into the Nile river. An unthinkable thing that she came up with. The Nile river was the very river that Pharaoh ordered to throw Hebrew boys into to be killed but she threw her own baby in the river. That was quite ironic but it was the wisdom that saved her son. By throwing him into the den of death, she saved his life.

Isn't that what the cross was? By throwing his son into the den of death, the cross, God saved so many lives. Not only Jesus's life, but so many lives. Love gave her courage and the courage brought wisdom to her. The Nile river was a dangerous place. There could be crocodiles, the basket could be turned over. Risking all that, she put her son into the Nile river. That is actual faith. Moses's sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

Pharaoh's Daughter

The last woman was Pharaoh's daughter. She was the daughter of the very man who did this evil thing. But she saw the baby and took pity on him. The Scripture says, *"The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. 'This must be one of the Hebrews' children,' she said."* (Exodus 2:5, 6). She knew that it was a Hebrew boy. If she didn't take pity on him, Moses could not have survived. In spite of knowing what her father was doing, she saved this Hebrew baby, even though that meant going against her father.

And in the end, Moses's mother became a nurse for him. The Scripture says, *"Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed it."* (Exodus 2:9). Not only did she save her son's life, but she could also nurse her own baby. What an irony! She was the first woman in the Bible who got wages for being a mother!

Life that brings Sorrow or Joy

Midwives who loved the life of others, a mother's courage and wisdom, and the compassion of the daughter of Pharaoh all worked together to save Moses's life. That is such a contrast to Pharaoh. That was such a different way of living your life than what Pharaoh did. Moses was born in a very difficult time, but because there were these courageous, loving, and wise women, he was able to survive. These women were highlighted as a contrast to Pharaoh. Pharaoh lived out his fear and created this monstrous situation by killing babies and creating so much loss and sorrow, but these women through their love, courage, and wisdom, saved so many lives and this very special person, Moses, and brought so much joy into this world. What kind of life do you want to live?

The kind of life that brings so much sorrow to other people or the kind of life that brings so much joy to others?

God's Story

In today's story, we don't hear much about God. It seems like God didn't do anything. It was all human beings who did the work. But we have to see that behind what humans did, there was God, as we reflected last week. It was God who gave the midwives the heart of loving the life of others. The Scripture says that they were God-fearing people. It was God who gave Moses's mother courage and wisdom. It was God who protected Moses in the Nile river and led him to the daughter of Pharaoh. It was God who let the daughter of Pharaoh have pity on the baby.

Isn't it really, really interesting? Moses was the one who would bring down Pharaoh's kingdom and yet he was led into the very core of Pharaoh's palace. Who did that? I'm sure God did it. Pharaoh embraced this person who would bring down his kingdom. God hid Moses in Pharaoh's bosom. That was very interesting and ironic.

God Works Through Cracks

God does not need to use raw power to do his work. That's not how God works. God does not use raw power to bring about freedom, salvation, and redemption. God uses seemingly weak people like these women. God uses their love, their courage, and their wisdom. Pharaoh's power was like a rock, an invincible rock. He had all the power. Resisting against Pharaoh's power was like throwing eggs against the rock. Nothing good would come out of that. But when you look at the rock carefully, there are cracks in the rock. And ultimately these cracks will destroy, shatter, the rock. And these cracks were these women. God used the power of those women who have love, courage, and wisdom. God uses these cracks to destroy the evil system, the evil power. That was the message of the cross.

St. Paul saw this wisdom when he said, "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may

also be made visible in our bodies.” (2 Corinthians 4:7-10)
Our love, our courage, our wisdom; they look like nothing but weakness. But our weakness becomes our strength when God uses it. God works through cracks. That’s how God works.

Let us not lose our hope. Sometimes we wonder and we ask ourselves, whatever we do, what good is it? Is it effective? Does it have the power to change anything? We will continuously pursue courage, love, wisdom and justice. Ultimately, God will use our weaknesses to bring about his power. May god bless you with this message. May your week be a blessed week.