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Sunday, July 4th, 2021
Sermon: “An Act of Desperation”:

Exodus 2:1-10
New International Version
The Birth of Moses

2 Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman,² and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months.³ But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket^[a] for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile.⁴ His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

⁵ Then Pharaoh’s daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it.⁶ She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. “This is one of the Hebrew babies,” she said.

7 Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"

8 "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. 10 When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses,^[b] saying, "I drew him out of the water."

Let's Pray:

In this passage you see that God used a captive woman from a despised people to bring forth a "Christ type", Moses, who was put into the water by his mother, and drawn out

By a servant girl at the direction of the daughter of not only the most powerful ruler in the world but the sworn murderous enemy of God's Chosen People, who were destined to be delivered from bondage by this baby, and then the descendants of these same

people would be responsible for bringing The Savior of all Humankind into the world in order to save it from The Dark One. Let us make several notes here, for there is much happening and being discussed in this short passage:

- **Both Moses' mother and father were from the Tribe of Levi; we are told in Exodus Chapter 6 that Moses' father was Amram; his mother was Jochebed.**
- **The time of Moses' birth was a tumultuous time for Israel. In Genesis we read that the tiny nation of Israel had been rescued from famine by Jacob's own son, Joseph, who rose to the position of what today we might call prime minister of Egypt. Jacob's sons brought him and their whole family to Egypt to live during a horrific famine that had spread all over this part of the world.**
- **However, hundreds of years later the king of Egypt, the pharaoh of the time, did not have the same connection to the Israelites that previous leaders had. The Israelites were**

growing stronger and more numerous, and Pharaoh began to fear the power of the Israelites, and that they would take over the country

- **Pharaoh tries to address this perceived threat in three ways;**
- **First, he worked the Israelites harder and harder, trying to wear them out, perhaps discourage them and keep them down**
- **Second, he ordered the midwives to kill the Hebrew baby boys;**
What we are seeing is the gradual increase in wickedness on the part of pharaoh and his regime
- **Third, and finally, when the two Hebrew midwives (probably a representative naming of two of many) tell the Egyptian leaders that the Israelite women are too robust for them to catch them in childbirth, Pharaoh orders all the people to throw EVERY newborn Hebrew baby boy into the Nile River.**
In other words Pharaoh is giving an order for massive genocide of the Hebrews.

Next, let's look at Exodus 2:2

- **Exodus 2:2 says that the baby Moses was “a goodly” or “fine” child. This does not mean he was selected for his beauty or perfection. It is more likely indicative of this child being seen as “a faith child”; a child given in answer to prayers said by Godly parents, crying out for deliverance. This is very much a foreshadowing of Samuel the Prophet, of the coming of John the Baptist and of the earthly arrival of Jesus Himself. So, we may surmise that the Mission of Moses was in direct answer to godly prayers.**
- **So Jochebed, herself God fearing, was trying to hide this tiny baby. Can you imagine how difficult this would be? A 3-month-old baby can be quite loud, active, and demanding at all hours of the day and night. It is likely that where they lived was crowded with neighbors of all kinds living nearby. Keep in mind that others living around them in the area may well have**

lost their own child or children to the Egyptians and there could be great jealousy and unease between the Israelites.

- I am guessing that many times Jochebed cried herself to sleep at night, weeping for this wee one. Crying out to God, and it was God who spoke to her heart to make a “tiny ark”, said to be similar in design to the Egyptian boats used in the rushes, back channels and edges of the Great Nile itself. Can’t you just hear her heart pounding as she quietly, sneakily, surreptitiously puts the mud and slime and pitch on the bullrushes, the grassy blooming flower plants that were ubiquitous in the Nile delta areas? Fashioning a tiny boat that in the original Hebrew is called “an ark” (same word as Noah’s Ark), she does so with trepidation, deeply fearing for her own safety and that of her baby boy. What if she were caught? Would the Egyptians toss him in the Nile like so much garbage? Or would he be taken to the soldiers and run through**

with a weapon? And then she and the others face certain execution!

- **She must have been shaking terribly in that cool, early morning mist. Soaked and caked in mud and slime and wet with the swampy water through which she crept slowly, pushing tiny Moses in his little ark; pushing, stopping, listening, reaching into the covered basket to let her wee one suckles on her fingers, filthy as they may have been, to somehow give this baby comfort, her knowing she was quite possibly sending him to his doom. How can I abandon my child?? My child! My child! She may well have cried out.**
- **Then perhaps she begins to slowly draw in deep breaths, to hold them, to count silently, to breathe out...her breathing becoming more rhythmic. “You have practiced this. You have prayed over this child. You must trust now that Jehovah Jireh has heard your cry for deliverance, for you and your people.”**

Perhaps she is saying to herself; “You have seen her come down here. You know she will be here. You know God can do a miracle and rescue this baby boy, even at the hand of a woman so powerful.”

- **Then, with one quick, final push, she sends God’s second ark out into the shallows, among the reeds at the edges of the mighty Nile. Perhaps Jochebed is taken aback to turn and see her precious 7-year-old, Miriam, up close behind her. Momma draws in a deep, hurried, and fearful breath. “You startled me child! What are you doing? Come. You must flee before we are caught!”**
- **“But no, Momma. I have prayed for this baby too! I have prayed and prayed that my little brother will one day deliver us! And I must do my part! I am small. I can be quiet. I can wait and watch and see what will happen! I must wait and watch, and I will pray!”**

- **So Jochebed leans into her faithful daughter, kisses her precious Miriam on the forehead, looks heavenward, and says a prayer to Jehovah the God who sees. When she turns back Miriam is gone.**
- **Jochebed slowly makes her way through the mud, the sludge, the slime, and the tamped down reeds, trying desperately to wipe her face and tears dry before coming into the common areas where she and so many others lived, in poverty, bondage and suffering.**
- **From here, as they say, the rest is history; for JEHOVAH JIREH, Yahweh, has in fact heard the righteous prayers not only of Jochebed and her husband Amram, as well as young Miriam, but of so many other Israelites who have prayed, fasted, and longed for The Deliverer to come to them. He has heard their cries, He raised up faithful Jochebed and Miriam,**

and behold, He raised up a whole cadre of people, including Pharaoh's daughter herself to be in the right place at the right time and to have in her heart to do the right thing.

Though the most powerful and possibly one of the most wicked leaders of his time had ordered the annihilation of so many Hebrew baby boys, he was actually no match for the Spirit of the Living God. Pharaoh's daughter knew in her heart what was right, and she did it. She ordered the child rescued. And then she gave the most powerful of gifts, she gave her blessing on Moses being allowed to live, to thrive, to grow up, to connect and to bond with and to be inculcated with the Word of God through his mother, Jochebed. You see, had this powerful woman not put her stamp of approval on the caring for and raising of this boy, the whole family would have lived under constant fear and threat and danger. But by this woman standing up for what was right, she became instrumental in God's plan of redemption for all of humankind.

This passage shows us several incredible truths:

These can be articulated this way:

God was not looking for perfection when He moved to put His plan in place to save the Israelites and thus make sure the eventual plan of His Salvation through the Jews by way of the Son of David would happen right on time.

No, I believe Our God was looking for something different. He was looking for three things in particular:

Teachability

Availability

And finally a willingness to live in Vulnerability

Look at Jochebed; she has already had two children, and then has a boy born under threat of death. Death not only to baby Moses but also death to her other children, her husband and herself. A lesser woman might have given up. Might have thrown in the towel. Might have come forward and confessed her so called sin, hoping to save herself and perhaps her family. But God had a plan, and we must look at this passage from God's point of view. He found a teachable mother. One that perhaps listened in her heart to God's voice, telling her this baby had a special calling on his life.

And then, as Jochebed has this child and this child turns out to be a baby boy, she realizes she is called to be available. Available to obey God. Available to do all in her power to raise and protect and keep alive this special baby. Yes, Jochebed is available for God's work to be worked in the most impossible and desperate situations.

And finally, we see that Jochebed is willing to be vulnerable. To live into the vulnerability that God has called her into.

And what we are seeing is life truths lived out. Whereas Pharaoh, who represents a life lived for self, a life lived in disobedience to the Supreme God of the universe, a man who thinks more highly of himself than he ought and allows people to worship him as a deity; this man travels down an increasingly wicked road. From experiencing fear of and loathing toward the Children of Israel, he moves forward with homicidal thoughts and genocidal actions. His path moves forward into ever-increasing darkness.

But Jochebed has a different path. She evidences teachability by God, availability to God, and a willingness to be vulnerable in order to accomplish God's greater purposes.

The same goes for not only Jochebed, but for Miriam, Moses' big sister. She exhibits these same traits, even as a youngster She, like

her momma, shows teachability, availability, and finally a willingness to walk in vulnerability to God's greater call.

And then, let us dig even deeper. For what about Pharaoh's daughter? Though we do not know her name, we do know her incredible deeds.

For, what does the Scripture say about her? I believe Exodus is telling us this daughter of the most powerful person in the world at the time was a woman who was teachable by God. She showed compassion and exhibited grace towards this baby boy with a death sentence over his head. And she showed mercy towards him in ways that very well could have meant her own death. But instead, she was available for God's purposes. She stepped up to the plate and hit one out of the park for God. And in so doing, there is that third characteristic; she, in her teachability and then her availability, stepped into her vulnerability. And that vulnerability, that need to rely on God first, that is God's desire for all of humanity! She had to step out in faith to God and if God

**didn't make things work, she was a goner. Just like Jochebed,
just like Miriam.**

**Make no mistake, this passage has been placed here, right where
it is to show all of humanity the power of walking in the light one
is given, in the place we are put at a time called now. And, by the
way, it is no mistake that Exodus holds up these three females as
incredible examples of what real faith is all about. And their faith
became a blessing to the entire world.**

**And remember folks, it was the actions, the willingness, and the
obedience these three demonstrated, that made it possible for
Moses to grow up and lead God's People to freedom and
eventually for God's people to birth Jesus Christ, the Savior of
the whole world.**

**In finishing, I want to bring these concepts of teachability,
availably and vulnerability into present day focus.**

You know, perhaps Jochebed putting her precious little baby in the river wasn't the most perfect idea? Today she would get arrested by the police, hauled in by the Child Protective Services, no doubt.

But truthfully, God takes us right where we are. He takes what we give Him (like a flimsy little basket boat), and he can surely use it. In fact, none of us are perfect, none of us ever will be on this earth. So what? This didn't stop Jochebed from praying AND acting and doing something!

And our imperfections do not keep God Almighty from doing a miracle! AMEN!

I want to mention 2 examples of what I think God is asking of us:

- **The first has to do with a praying momma;**
- **When our family lived in rural South Africa, we encountered some of the most amazing things. One of those**

is the story of a mother, not unlike Jochebed. This mother lived thousands of miles away from where we were living. She had raised her son the best she could, prayed for him, taught him of God. But this young man grew up and moved far away. And in the process, he seemed to lose his way in drugs and a squandered life of sin. Well, his mother, though she did not know where he had ended up, did not quit praying over and for this son. She continued to pray and pray and asked God that God might bring that son back to her before she passed from this earth, no matter how bad his situation. Well, God worked in incredible ways, to where God brought this man into our lives out in the far reaches of the Western Cape. He was very ill, in fact dying from aids. He was homeless, penniless, and completely (it would appear) without hope in the world.

- But you know what? God had heard this mother's cry for help. One thing led to another and a dear Christian friend of**

ours was able, by God's grace, to track down this mother all the way across South Africa, find out where she lived. And then this friend, a social worker, was able to drive this man hundreds and hundreds of miles to be reunited with his praying mother; the one that was putting into practice teachability, availability and vulnerability. And these two, mother and son, were reunited, and as much as could be, all was made right for these two, mother and son, before they passed into eternity.

- Second story: This is about our own dear Paula Lanum. Paula went home to be with Jesus, and we had her Memorial Service recently. I was given the honor of spending time with Paula and her dead husband Clay over the past two years as Rose Hill Church's Minister of Congregational Care. The very first time I visited Paula Lanum, she was leading a Bible Study at her assisted care home where she and Clay lived. Sitting around that table**

were other residents, and also some of the on-duty staff of the facility! Here was Paula, who herself struggled with significant medical challenges, was helping support and care for her ailing husband, and, as she and her own family have said, had a lengthy struggle for many years with mental illness. Yet, what of it? Well, what of it is right; what do we see in her life?

- We see those same attributes; teachability, availability, and vulnerability. It takes God's mighty grace no matter what He calls us to, to keep on going. Paula, like Jochebed before her, allowed God to teach her heart His Truth, and then allowed Him to lead her into availability to do His will and His work His way, and you know what? That yielding to God will always lead us into places of vulnerability, so that our trust is in Him and not ourselves.
- In finishing, I just want to ask that each of us take a look at our own lives, right where we are. What would God like to

be working on (teaching us) in our life? How are we stepping into availability for His purposes or not? And finally, are we allowing ourselves to walk in His power, light, and goodness no matter how vulnerable that makes us?

Let us pray.