

There is a moment in every great story where everything looks lost. Hope gone. Bad guys prevailing. Impossible odds. No hero on the scene yet, or if so not seeming very heroic. That's where we find ourselves in Exodus chapter 2. God had created and told his people to take over the world but now they are enslaved by the most powerful tyrant in the world and he has just issued an edict that every Hebrews son be thrown into the Nile. Universal ethnic cleansing. The seed of the serpent seeking to destroy the seed of the woman. Oh but God.

This morning we meet a baby boy in a basket, a fugitive in the desert, and a faithful God who hears. / Exodus 2 [42] This is Let's consider the birth of a beautiful Savior, Moses in Midian, and the covenant faithfulness of God.

I. The Birth of a Beautiful Savior (1-10) – 1-2 Their names aren't even listed. This future savior of Israel is born in obscurity, must like the future savior of the world. These parents, unnamed here, but revealed as Amram and Jochebed later (6:20), did not allow Pharaoh's decree of death to stop them from multiplying as God intended. They are of the house of Levi, showing us that Moses has a priestly pedigree. God's Law will come through him and he will become a mediator for the people soon enough. The parents hid him for three months. Newborn babies can be hid for a little while.

So, Jochebed sees that this baby is a *fine* child. Now, if Moses wrote this he's like "I'm just stating the facts. Is what it is, don't hate the player, hate the game. In Stephen's Acts 7 sermon he says, "At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God's sight" (7:20, Heb 11:23). Must have been noticeable. I mean if we're honest, most newborns aren't that cute. Most look like a red-faced tiny bald version of Winston Churchill. But mine were cute. Thick head of hair sure helps.

But actually, this is new creation language. The word "fine" is the word *tōv*. It was first used in Genesis 1. Gen 1:31 "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" – *tov*. This is a recreation moment. Like the creation was *tov*, Moses was *tov*. Moses will bring a new world. Here we have the birth of what will be a new people, a new beginning. Our God is the God of new beginnings. Aren't you thankful for that? New mercy every day. Never too late to make a new start. God still doing it.

3-4 The baby grows too old to hide any longer. The coos and cries are too loud now. So she puts him in a basket, makes it waterproof, and hides him in the reeds. This word for reeds is *suph*. It will be used later to refer to the Sea of Reeds (*yam suph*), what we call the Red Sea (13:18) that Israel will cross. Safe in the reeds now, safety through the sea of reeds later. / But, can you imagine the pain? Your baby boy. Letting him go, with no hope of ever seeing him again. Tough moment to say the least.

Technically, she obeys Pharaoh. **1:22**. So his mother puts him in the Nile. / Now, here, circumstances seem hopeless. You been there? Maybe you're there now. Oh but God. He is writing a story beyond what we can see. At any given moment he may be doing a thousand

things behind the scenes that we know not of. Behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face. For our good and for his glory.

Big sister, later we know her name is Miriam (15:20), stands by and watches from the bank. Sis stands watch. Aren't you thankful for faithful siblings? Young people, make sure you make your best friends are your siblings. Your other friends you have now won't last but your brothers and sisters will always be with you. Miriam was a good sister. She was likely 6-10 years old, old enough to converse meaningfully with adults but not old enough to be working in the field yet. She won't let little brother out of her sight.

This word for basket (*tevah*) only occurs one other place in the Hebrew Bible. Gen 6:14: "Make yourself [a basket] an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch." Noah goes into an ark, Moses goes into an ark. Both arks are waterproofed with pitch. There is a pattern of salvation through water. In Genesis, the world is judged but Noah the new Adam is saved from judgment through an ark. In Exodus, Moses is saved from judgment through an ark. Noah and Moses are re-creation figures. Fresh starts. Agents of new creation. Displays of God's mercy.

This points forward to a future salvation as we pass through water as we are immersed in the baptismal pool. So Peter, right after mentioning the ark being brought safely through water, says "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as a pledge to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (3:21). Now of course it doesn't save without faith but Peter wants you to see the pattern of God using water for deliverance.

5-7 Pharaoh's daughter – the daughter of the man who put a death sentence on all Hebrew baby boys – bathes in the river and sees the ark among the reeds. She sees the baby and has compassion. The sight of a baby does something deep in a woman's soul. Young girls, as you think about your future and make college and career plans, know this. When you have that child, all other priorities are rearranged and realigned.

God uses the compassion of a mother. She disobeys her father, the King of Egypt. Pharaoh's daughter had almost certainly seen other Hebrew babies floating down the river, without a basket. She doesn't know Yahweh, but she is made in his image, so much like God will do with his people at the end of this chapter, here she saw, she heard, she took pity, she rescued. The redemption plan of God rolls on because women cared for children. What a gift. / Then Miriam calls out from the bank. Hey, miss, um, your honor, you need a nurse? I know some Hebrew women that will be happy to do that. Real reasonable fee. Let me know!

8-9 Can you imagine the flood of emotion as that baby is handed back into the arms his mother. She gets to nurse and care for her baby and Egypt will pay her to do so. What a divine flex. Another L for Pharaoh. He tried to extinguish the people of God and the deliverer that God will use to extinguish Pharaoh will be raised in Pharaoh's own house. Are you kidding me? Miriam

sister of Moses is this real life right now? Come on somebody. Our God is able. If God is for us, what can Pharaoh do to me?

God does it. But, God uses means to accomplish his will. And he can and will use anyone. Here, you have the courage and creativity of a couple young women. Ch. 1 a couple of Hebrew midwives feared God more than man.

One day, 80 years later, Miriam must have remembered that day on the bank of the water. In exodus 15, after the mighty act of God, she takes up a tambourine and leads the women dancing and singing praises to God: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea" (15:19-21, Micah 6:4). What a faithful and kind God we serve.

Pharaoh is outwitted by 5 women: two midwives, the mother and sister of Moses and then his own daughter. Women of God, you are significant. Serve the Lord. Be all in. He will use you. No Ruth, no David, no Abigail, no Michal, no David, no widow of Zarephath, no Elijah on Mount Carmel. Think Rahab and Ester, on and on – mighty women of God.¹ / Remember how in Gen 3 the snake deceives the woman? That's flipped now. The women are deceiving the snake. The offspring of the woman defeating the offspring of the Serpent.

10 Talk about an emotional roller coaster. You have a child you know will be sentenced to death, you hide him, you send him to the water, he's rescued, returned, now required once again. Moses is raised as a Hebrew with the privileges of Egypt. The Levite becomes an Egyptian. **1:22** "every son" but then the King has a son. Another flex, another L for Pharaoh. He is named Moses - *Moseh* related to *masa*, which means "to draw out."

II. Moses in Midian (11-22) 11-12 This is not just passive observing but active inspection. He is looking upon his people. His heart is there and he sees one of his own people being beaten and he intervenes. He will defend his people. He strikes the Egyptian and it is a fatal blow. Moses is still Egyptian in many ways. He hides the evidence. [Isa 59:15-16 saw no one coming to help]²

13-15 Oppressive violence breeds a cult of violence among the oppressed.³ Hurt people hurt people. Moses tries to deliberate but his own people disregard him. This will be his life story. As Stephen would summarize in his sermon in Acts: "He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand" (7:25). **14:11-12, 15:24a, 17:1-7** (Numb 12:1-16). Leadership is hard.

¹ Wright, 69.

² Strike *nakah* used in 11, 12, 13, 3:20 5:14 7:17 9:15 12:12-13.

³ CW, 80.

Moses heads to Midian, further East. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham's second wife Keturah. They are the ones who bought Joseph.⁴ Readers of Genesis will know that good things happen at wells (Jn 4:6). Isaac meets Rebekah (Gen 24) and Jacob and Rachel (Gen 29).

16-20 More water. Moses meets some misogynist shepherds and he drives them away. Verse 17 says he saved them. When they return to their father here called Reuel, later Jethro, they say Moses "delivered them." He rescued them (hitsil), same word used in **6:6-8**.

Notice that Moses is not in the best spot. On the run. Displaced. Guilty. Yet, his core personhood remains.

Moses is a defender of victims, of the weak, of the marginalized. He shares the heart of his God.

21-22 Moses was content to stay in Midian for a season of obscurity, 40 years in fact (7:7, Acts 7:30). He marries Zipporah. Notice the hospitality! This pagan priest brings Moses in. This will be a time of formation and waiting. / They name their son Gershom, which means "sojourner there." Every time he called his son, he'd be reminded that he was not home. Still exiled.

III. Cries Come Up to the Covenant God 23-25 A new king brings no relief and the people cry out to God.⁵ God is mentioned in v. 23 for the first time in the chapter. He moves from backstage to front and center. When God seems absent, he is hearing our cries. Their prayer was being heard, but they didn't know that. Keep crying out. Keep going. Persevere. Press on. Gods' silence is not his absence. He may not come when you call, but he's always on time. He has not forgotten his covenant. He has not forgotten you. / He hears. His ear is turned to his people. They groan, they cry out for help, they cry for rescue. **3:7-9**.

And he remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 73 of the 169 occurrences of the verb "remember" have God as the subject but of course it is not as though he had forgotten. For God to remember means he is now about to take action in relation to what he remembers on behalf of those whom he remembers.⁶

Those covenant promises are foundational to Exodus and indeed to the whole storyline of Scripture. He is the covenant God. The first covenant was with Noah. He promises not to destroy the world ever again. Then comes the covenant with Abraham. Gen 12. He promises land, offspring, and blessing. A place, a swarming people, more than the stars of the sky, and blessing – and God would bless the whole world through an offspring of Abraham. Reiterated to Isaac and Jacob. God made promises and he's gonna keep them.

⁴ Isa 19:16-20.

⁵ Cf. Gen 4:10, 18:20-21 (Ezek 16:49)

⁶ CW, 84n12.

There are four verbs used here: God hears, God remembers, God saw (*ra'ah* 2:11), God knew. He hears, he remembers, he sees, he knows. What a God, what a God. A God of *justice* against the wicked, *compassion* for the oppressed, *faithful* to his covenant promises. Just, compassionate, faithful.

Did you notice how this chapter ends like it begins? With a marriage, a Son, a cry, and a rescue.⁷ First with the Levite parents and Moses crying and being rescued. Now you have Moses marrying Zipporah having a baby, the people cry and God promises to rescue.

The plan of God moves from the OT with the birth of a savior and the Exodus to the NT and the birth of a savior and a greater Exodus. Moses is what you call a corporate personality. He embodies the people. This what the word Messiah means. One who represents his people. Moses in the river points back to flood and forward to the Exodus. His water rescue prefigures the nation's rescue. His escape after the death of an Egyptian is a prelude to the Israel flight after the death of many Egyptians. His 40 years in the desert foreshadows the same for Israel. Burning bush we'll see next week anticipates Israel before the fire at Sinai. God saves his people at the flood through an ark. God saves Moses from the water through an ark. Moses passes through the water. His people will soon pass through the water. He is hidden in the reeds and God will cover his enemies with the Sea of Reeds.

Moses means "drawn out." Israel will be drawn out of the water. Moses has a death and rebirth in the water, like his people soon will. As do we. We are united to the savior's death and resurrection via the passage of water. Rom 6:3-4: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." The waters are the instrument of death and deliverance.

Moses departs from Egypt into the Sinai desert, foretelling his people's exile in the desert. Moses rescues and guides the daughters of Midian like he will rescue and guide the people of Israel. His own people resist him but foreigners greet him with open arms. Like the later savior, he is rejected by his own. John 1:11: "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him." Rejected by his own but welcomed by the Gentiles.

What's your right response? Moses seeks justice for his people. He could have lived the comfortable life. He rejected power, prestige, and wealth. Our response should be similar: loyalty to this God. Allegiance. Faith. Heb 11:23-27:

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered

⁷ CW, 81.

the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.”

12:1-2: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Benediction: Now, as you go, may the God who hears the cries of his people and keeps his covenant see you and know.