

## **Mom, Midwives and Mother's Day**

I always struggle a bit as to what to do on Mother's Day. I know this is a special day for many of you and I know it is a difficult day for others. Regardless of the many emotions involved today, I think it's fair to say that Mother's Day gives us an opportunity to do a couple of worthwhile things. 1) We can give thanks to the Lord for the person that gave birth to us. Whether your mother is with you or has already gone to heaven, you can give thanks to the Lord. Whether your relationship with your mother was wonderful or perhaps it was a difficult relationship, nevertheless, you are here because your mother gave birth to you and we should be grateful and thankful to God and to Mom for our life. 2) Mother's Day gives us the opportunity to give thanks to the Lord and to show our love and appreciation for the person who raised us. Perhaps that was your birth mother, perhaps it was your adoptive mother or a grandmother or someone else – regardless, for that one who loved you and nurtured you and taught you and corrected you, and believed in you, we thank the Lord and we thank them.

Mother's Day also gives preachers an opportunity to talk about some issues that we think are important to the church, not just for women or mothers, but for all of us. That's what I want to do this morning.

Contrary to what Sarah said last Sunday, we aren't going to rediscover anything this morning, however I reserve the right to rediscover something else in a couple of weeks.

This morning I want you to turn with me to Exodus 1. I have talked about the ladies mentioned in this story a number of times over the last 25 years of pastoring but I want us to look at this passage of Scripture again today. I want you to see the difference three women made in history. I want you to see this because I believe there is a profound need in our world for radical mothers and fathers and radical folks of all ages, to take a stand for Christ and his kingdom.

We talked a few Sunday's ago about rediscovering Christian courage, about the profound need for a radical Christian counter-culture. We have been called to follow Christ and submit to his word rather than live our lives according to the world and its distorted values. It won't be easy and it certainly won't be popular. We will be living our lives for the most part, contrary to the world's priorities and values. It won't be without

cost, but it will be worth it all when we stand before God.

You remember the story in Exodus 1. Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers and ended up in Egypt where through a series of God ordained events he becomes the second most powerful person in the nation, second only to Pharaoh himself. There is a famine in Israel and Joseph's family comes to him in Egypt where he provides for them. Over the next centuries the bible tells us the Israelites flourished and became "exceedingly numerous so that the land was filled with them." But then the bible tells us, **"Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. 'Look,' he said to his people, 'the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.' So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor and they built Pithom and Remeses as store cities for Pharaoh."** Exodus 1:8-11.

The Israelites had become enslaved to the Egyptians and forced to work at hard labor. The bible says they "made their lives bitter with hard labor and used them ruthlessly." In spite of the hard labor and difficult conditions and ruthless treatment, the bible says, "the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread." So ultimately the Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill the babies. Essentially they were to abort the male babies, telling the mothers that they were still born.

Pharaoh didn't want the Israelites to prosper, to multiply, to grow in numbers and in influence. The devil doesn't want you and your family and the church of Jesus Christ to prosper, to multiply, to grow in numbers and in influence and anointing and he is prepared to do whatever it takes to defeat you and to defeat the church.

Quickly let me show you what the bible says and allow me to draw some parallels to our situation today in our world and our culture.

**1. "Come we must deal shrewdly with them..."** The enemy always deals shrewdly with us. The devil is going to use every means possible to defeat you, to render the church powerless and without influence in the world. Hell is dealing shrewdly with us. In some countries and cultures the church is being persecuted and attacked. In some cultures, the focus is on compromise and assimilation, and then intimidation. It's what's

happening in America right now.

Pharaoh had tried it with Joseph. He gave him an Egyptian name and identity, he gave him an Egyptian wife as well, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. Assimilate him into Egyptian culture. Forget about the God of the Hebrews. We have plenty of gods, you don't need your own.

They tried it with Moses, trying to make him an Egyptian instead of a Hebrew. The bible tells us of Moses refusal to be assimilated into Egyptian culture. "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt..." Hebrews 11:24-26. Years later the enemy would try it with Daniel and with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The devil will try it with you and your children, to spiritually and culturally turn you into an Egyptian - to make you into a secular person, blindly going along with the world, assimilated into American culture, valuing whatever Hollywood or New York says to value, adopting a totally secular worldview, so much a part of the world's system that we lose our identity as the people of God and we dismiss God's word as irrelevant to our lives. We live as if God's word is just a suggestion to us and not a commandment to be obeyed. Beware of subtle compromise and assimilation. It's the devil dealing shrewdly with us, trying to get us, like Paul's co-worker Demas, to fall in love with this present world and to lose our faith and our relationship with God.

## **2. "So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor."**

Beware of becoming enslaved to sin and the devil. The devil wants to enslave you if he can, to become your master and dominate every area of your life.

It's interesting that Pharaoh had them building treasure cities for himself. The devil is quick to use treasure - material possessions to enslave us. We become so focused on the treasures and treasure cities of this world that we forget we have been called to be citizens of another kingdom, another city. We fall in love with the world, with its money and possessions and things and then we are willing to sacrifice anything and everything, including our marriage and family and our relationship with God in order to have all of these things! Watch out. The enemy will enslave you to possessions and

earthly treasures. Notice the passage concerning Moses said he regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ to be of greater value than the treasures of Egypt. The passage continues, “because he was looking ahead to his reward.” The devil will try to enslave you to your own passion and lust and desire. Don’t allow yourself or your family to become slaves to the enemy or to his offer of worldly treasure. Keep looking ahead. Our reward isn’t here in this life - it is in the life to come. Stand firm in the freedom of Christ and don’t let the enemy enslave you.

**3. “They made their lives bitter...”** The devil will make your life bitter. He will poison your mind, your feelings and emotions. He will use everything he can to make you feel rejected, worthless, slighted and overlooked. He will make you bitter and angry at God, at others, at friends and family, at yourself. He will make you bitter at life itself if you let him.

**4. “If it is a boy, kill him...”** Finally, Pharaoh told the midwives to abort the boys, to kill the babies. Can you imagine being ordered to kill a baby at birth because of its’ gender? It sounds evil and demonic doesn’t it? It does when you put it that way, but if you just call it gender selection, if you just say it is for the psychological welfare of the mother, then it sounds like something acceptable in America today. The truth is it was wrong then and it is wrong today.

But it’s not just literal abortion. The devil would like nothing more than to trick you into aborting the plans and purposes of God and the things he desires to see birthed in your life. He wants you to give up on yourself, on your children, on God’s plan for your life. He wants you to give up on the possibilities that God has put in your heart. He wants you parents to give up on raising your children and to just look to satisfy your own desires for pleasure. “Forget the children – what about me?” becomes the cry of a spoiled generation. And some of you teenagers have already given up on something God put in your heart - a burden or a calling, a purpose. The devil has convinced you that God can’t use you, or that you’ve sinned and messed up and there is no way back. Don’t let the devil convince you to abort the plans God has for your life. He is a liar.

God has other plans for you and he had other plans for these Israeli babies. Look at what he did. He brought three godly women – two midwives named Shiphrah

and Puah and a godly mother named Jochabed to make the difference. These ladies were revolutionaries. They were living and acting counter-culturally, choosing to do what was right regardless of the cost or consequence. Look at what the bible says about these ladies because we need some more ladies and moms and more Christians like these two midwives and this Jewish mother.

**1. The midwives and mom feared God more than they feared Pharaoh.** The bible says, **“The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.” Exodus 1:17.** What a powerful statement. They feared God and did not do what the king told them to do. They chose life for God’s people instead of a culture of death. The same was true of Moses’ mother and father (Amram and Jochebed - Ex. 6:20). The writer of Hebrews states, **“By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.” Hebrews 11:23**

Saints of God, we live in a culture that no longer fears God. By every means possible the world system is trying to assimilate Christians into that secular culture so we will simply accept or excuse every sin that they embrace. We will get so used to it, so comfortable with it that we will no longer cry out against sin or stand against it. We will go along to get along. And if we refuse to be assimilated into the culture then they will use intimidation. Groups picketing churches and churches losing their tax exempt status are present examples of this intimidation.

Get ready because the people of God will be blasted from every angle. And we are going to have to decide, do we fear God more than we fear politicians or judges? Do we fear God more than we fear being rejected by our peers, by the popular crowd at school or at work? Do we fear God more than we fear losing our job, our position, our title, our income, our safety net?

These two midwives feared God. Moses’ mom and dad feared God. To fear God is to stand in awe of God and his power and his grace. To fear God is to recognize who He is and who we are and who he has chosen to make us by his grace and mercy. To fear God is to acknowledge what he has done for us. To fear God is to place him upon the throne of your life and to submit to him and to his lordship in your

life.

God is looking for people, moms and dads and sons and daughters who will fear God more than they fear the rebuke or scorn or disdain of the world. God is looking for people who are more concerned with what God thinks than with what the world thinks or what their friends think or what their boss thinks or anyone else. God is looking for people who will refuse to compromise, regardless of the risk or the cost. We are often so intimidated, so afraid we might offend someone but we seldom consider that our actions or our silence might be offensive to God.

The midwives feared God. Did they fear Pharaoh? They knew he could have them killed. They knew he would likely feed them to the crocodiles in the Nile but they feared God more than they feared man. We need people like the midwives, like Shiphrah and Puah.

We need moms and dads like Moses' parents who will fear God more than they fear the king or the culture. We need moms who will tell their daughters that we are Christians and we are going to live as followers of Christ, and that will be reflected in how we dress and how we conduct ourselves and how we relate to the opposite sex. We need mothers who will do more than tell their daughters, they will show their daughters how to live a holy life, a crucified life, a life that is pleasing to God.

We need dads who will fear God more than they fear the king or the culture. We need dads who will show their sons what it means to be a man of God and that will be reflected in how they dress and how they talk and how they treat members of the opposite sex.

We need to learn the lessons of the midwives and Jochabed on Mother's Day. Let's determine that we will fear God and honor him regardless of the cost and that we will teach our children, by word and by example to have that same healthy fear and reverence for God.

Look at what the midwives told the Pharaoh:

**2. "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women..."** "They are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive." May it always be. You see, God is looking for people who will dare to be different from the world. He's not looking for people to be weird, or for people who think being a Christian witness means you have to be rude and

obnoxious. But he is looking for people who understand what it means to be called out. He has called us to walk with him and to live for him and to be like him. We are to be in this world but we are not to be of this world. We are to be salt and light Jesus said. Salt is not like the stuff it flavors or preserves. Light is not like the darkness it illuminates and permeates.

God is looking for people who are willing to take a stand for him, even if that means we will stand out as different. Even if that means we must stand alone if necessary. We have to understand to be God's people means we won't live like everyone else. Our values and priorities and choices and decisions and lifestyle will be surrendered to Christ. Our choices won't be about what pleases us the most or what makes us the most comfortable, rather our choices and values will be about what pleases Christ and honors him. We aren't like everyone else. We are followers of Christ and citizens of another kingdom.

We need mothers who will teach their daughters to follow Jesus, even if it means following him alone, standing alone for Jesus. The world says "go this way" and God is looking for discerning people who will say, "that way is a dead end. It leads to death and destruction. I won't go that way and I urge you to come and follow me as I follow Christ because he alone is the way, the truth and the life." Don't be afraid to take a stand. Don't be afraid to be different for Jesus.

But what difference can one or two or three or four people make when they take a stand? Understand the importance of what happened. If you read Exodus 2, you find out that Moses was one of those babies that Shiphrah and Puah refused to kill. His mother Jochabed hid him for three months and then devised a plan to spare his life. The stand these three women took, to defy the edict of the king, to fear God and do what was right, changed the destiny of the people of God. Moses was born and he was the one who delivered the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. Your choices, your righteous decisions can make a difference in the world.

Are you willing to take a stand, to fear God more than you fear the world? To love God more than you love the world? Are you willing to take a stand, even if you have to stand alone? Are you willing to live a life that is different from the rest of our world? To live counter-culturally, living as a follower of Jesus Christ rather than a

follower of the world?

It's interesting that Shiphrah's name means elegance and beauty. We need some moms and some spiritual midwives who will reflect the beauty of Jesus, the beauty of holiness and grace. We need some moms and spiritual moms and midwives who will show their children, their daughters what true beauty is all about.

I hear ladies say you can't find modest clothes in the stores anymore. We may have to start making our own clothes again. But we need moms who will understand and then teach their daughters about what true beauty is all about. Beauty is not about sensuality and sexual enticement. That's all that children and teens and any of us see and hear anymore. From the world's perspective, beauty is all about outward appearance: being the right size, wearing the right clothes, having the right hair style. Our culture bases everything on outward appearance. We talk about the beautiful people, but then when you scratch beneath that "beautiful" surface, you find some really ugly stuff. Those beautiful people are unhappy, paranoid, trying to numb their own pain with drugs and alcohol, can't remain in a lasting relationship. That kind of beauty is barely even skin deep and underneath their lives are filled with rot and decay.

That's because beauty isn't about high cheek bones and long legs. Beauty isn't about being a size 4 or 6. Beauty is about character. It is about integrity. It is about living a life pleasing to Christ. It's about serving God and serving others.

It is sad to see so many little girls trying to be like some singer or movie star and the only expression of beauty they know to try to imitate is sensual and seductive. (That reality show of little girls in beauty contests with all the makeup and costumes. I think they're all guilty of child abuse.)

Moms - teach your children about modesty and true beauty and elegance. Our culture feeds us vulgarity and ugliness and everything is crass. God's gifts of beauty and sexuality have been cheapened and made vulgar. Take a stand against it.

Help your children find their beauty in Christ. Let Jesus reveal himself through your life and you will be beautiful. That's true beauty. And while I'm meddling this deep, Dad's, provide a spiritual covering for your sons and daughters. Dad's, you don't have to be a jerk about this, but, protect your daughters. You know if the clothes they are wearing are inappropriate and immodest. You were a teenaged boy once. Help

your daughters find appropriate clothing.

Ladies of all ages, ask yourself, “will the clothes I’m wearing tempt a brother in the Lord to sin, to lust? Will it cause inappropriate thoughts and desires?” Stop to ask yourself, “Am I purposely putting a stumbling-block in someone’s path by wearing this?” Think about it. Dress in ways that are pleasing to Christ and not just pleasing to the world’s idea of beauty.

Shiphrah means beauty and elegance. The bible teaches us how to adorn ourselves with true beauty and elegance. Dare to embrace God’s definition of beauty.

Puah means to cry aloud. We need mom’s and spiritual midwives who are willing to cry aloud, to cry out in prayer and intercession for their children, for their family. We need people who will cry aloud over injustice and wickedness, who will cry out about the culture of death, who will cry out about the sins of our nation, who will cry aloud for the unborn, the elderly, the persecuted, the lost, the hurting, the abused, the homeless, cry aloud for those who have no voice, who have no strength.

Shiphrah and Puah did what was right and the bible says, **“So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.” Exodus 1:20-21**

God will honor the faithfulness of his people. If you will reverence God and obey him, he will take care of you and of your family. If you will raise your children to fear God and to obey him, he will take care of them. He will grant you the blessing and increase you need in your life.

I believe he granted Shiphrah and Puah the desires of their heart because they were obedient and totally surrendered to the Lord. They feared God rather than the Pharaoh. Just think, because of this faithful mother and these two midwives, Moses would lead the people out of Egypt and into God’s promise. Without these three women, Moses would have never survived infancy and all of history would have been different.

Moms. Dads. Young adults. Teenagers. Kids. You can make a difference. Your life, your choice can make a difference. Are you willing to take a stand and do what he calls you to do?

Who will take a stand to live for Jesus? Who will commit to living out his beauty and crying out in prayer for your family? God is looking for some radical women and some radical young ladies and some radical men and young men. God is looking for a few good women and men. How about you?

A mom, a midwife, just one person can make all the difference. Are you that one?