

Last week we recalled how the descendents of Abraham ended up in Egypt and the national social engineering program of Pharaoh. Fear motivated the Pharaoh and the Egyptians to enslave the Hebrews as a work force in an effort to limit their population growth. God had promised he would multiply them like the stars in the heavens. (Genesis 15:5) When man goes against the promises of God, guess who wins? The more they were oppressed the more they multiplied. The brave midwives took a stand and refused to follow Pharaoh's instructions at the risk of their own lives. God not only spared their lives but also blessed them with families. Then Pharaoh tried a crude form of population control; throw all male babies in the Nile.

Commented [notes1]: Genesis 15:5 (ESV)
5 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

We don't know how long this horror had gone on before Moses was born. We do know it must have traumatized and demoralized the Hebrew people. This is again one of those times when man would cry out, "How could God let this happen?" The subject is much bigger than we have time to deal with this morning, but let me give you a summary.

Man and some angels have been given free will. Why would God do such a thing knowing it would bring a curse on the earth, untold suffering, the loss of lives in Haiti as earthquakes are surely part of the curse connected with the sin of Adam and Eve's rebellion? How could God allow these babies to be thrown to crocodiles, and the resultant pain in the mothers' hearts? Sin by its very nature brings destructive consequences that ripple out in waves of damage.

The alternative is that we all be automatons, no choices allowed. We could have been made to obey. But where there is forced obedience, love cannot exist. If there is to be a love relationship, there must be the freedom to choose. Good cannot be appreciated as it should without an understanding of the destructiveness of evil. God is always present with His hand stretched out to us, inviting us to turn from darkness to light, to reject bitterness and choose love, to comfort us in the pain that is the consequence of the evil choices of man. (Hebrews 4:15-16) Often it is in the pain and suffering that we turn to God for His help and comfort. God is more concerned about our eternal good than our temporal happiness.

Commented [notes2]: Hebrews 4:15-16 (NIV)
15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.
16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Pharaoh is just one man in a long line of rebels against God, Cain, Lamech, Nimrod, Jezebel, Haman, Antiochus Epiphanies, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, to name just a few. Some only took the lives of a few but were noted for the hardness of heart in doing so. Some took the lives of millions. They are pawns in Satan's army of the unbelieving. Don't you think Satan loves it when we question God for the pain and suffering he, Satan, instigates? What better propaganda in this war of good and evil than to blame the other side for your crimes. You'll notice that this is a common tactic, accusing others of what the accuser is guilty. Those intolerant of righteousness and truth will call believers intolerant.

So while Pharaoh convinced his nation to participate in the genocide of the Hebrew people, a few brave souls like Shiphrah and Puah lived by faith. We find later that the names of the parents of Moses are Amram and Jochabed. (Exodus 6:20) At this

Commented [notes3]: Exodus 6:20 (NIV)
20 Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, who bore him Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years.

point, the focus is just on the baby so we are not yet told their names. The book of Hebrews tells us they were people who lived by faith. (Acts 7:20) What happened to people who tried to hide their baby boys? Surely there were some that did, and there must have been a punishment severe enough to deter others from trying to do so. Hebrews 11:23 (ESV) Tells us, ²³ *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.*

Commented [notes4]: Acts 7:20 (ESV)
20 At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God's sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house,

Imagine Jochabed trying to keep her newborn quiet and hidden. That little baby must have kept the angels very busy. Imagine the tension each time they heard the baby cry out, and trying to anticipate the baby's needs before it cried. But by the time he was 3 months old, the little boy's lungs were just too strong, and discovery was inevitable.

Exodus 2:3 (ESV) ³ *When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the riverbank.* She obeyed the Pharaoh. The baby was thrown in the river, technically. It was a last ditch effort to put the child in the hands of the true God. Like Shiphrah and Puah before her, she decided she could not obey a decree that violated her conscience. Remember, the Law had not yet been given, but the stories of murder that were passed down from the time of Cain and through Noah and his sons were told around the Hebrew cooking fires. They knew life was a precious gift of God. The very wonder of birth assured them that to take that life was a horrible crime against God who gave it. (Genesis 9:6)

Commented [notes5]: Genesis 9:6 (NIV)
6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.

Now, the baby's sister waited and watched to see what would happen. Jochabed would not have had her watch if she did not have faith that God would intervene. What mother would have her daughter watch if she suspected the worse? As Providence would have it, the daughter of Pharaoh passed by on her way to bathe. She heard the cries and sent a servant out to get the basket and bring it to her. Exodus 2:6 (ESV) ⁶ *When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."* What woman's heart is not touched by the cry of a baby? The daughter of Pharaoh was no different. I wonder if she deplored what was happening to the Hebrew babies, or if it was just the sight of the baby and the sound of his crying that caused her to open her heart?

Sometimes the pain of others is easier to ignore as long as we don't have to face it up close. The situation in Haiti hurts us all. News agencies realize this and they are already limiting the reporting as it isn't good for ratings. But if you were there, if you stood among the hungry, if you talk to a family about the loss of loved ones, you become overwhelmed and have to act. You would do what you could until the pain in your heart becomes so great that you have to separate yourself. I've heard that many who leave Haiti after a time want to return and do more. The cry of that baby grabbed the heart of the daughter of Pharaoh and would not let go.

Opportunity was knocking. Exodus 2:7 (ESV) ⁷ *Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?"* There were numerous Hebrew women who would love to have a

replacement for the baby they lost, but God had the baby nursed by his own mother, and even paid her to do so. (Ephesians 3:20) Just as the midwives were rewarded for their defiance of the evil edict, so Jochabed was rewarded for her resistance to an ungodly decree. (Acts 5:29)

Commented [notes6]: Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)
20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Many of our nations spiritual leaders came together to write the Manhattan Declaration. It draws a moral line in the sand and declares we will not move away from the godly issues of life and morality. You can go on-line and see if you agree and are willing to sign it. It marks you as one of those conservatives that will not obey laws that require you to violate your conscience. It declares the signers will not devalue life or the sanctity of marriage even if a law is passed that tells us that we must. It is a non-violent resistance of the steady erosion of Biblical principles in our culture by the passing of ungodly laws. It is doing what our heroes in this story did, by defying the culture and laws that defy God.

Commented [notes7]: Acts 5:29 (NIV)
29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

Pharaoh has done everything he can to stop the proliferation of the Hebrews, but God keeps His promises. (Genesis 12:2) Now, trying to keep them from leaving and going to the land God has promised them, he is destroying the baby boys. But the irony is that the one that would lead them back to the Promised Land is saved by that Pharaoh's very own daughter.

Commented [notes8]: Genesis 12:2 (NIV)
2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

Think how bleak it must have looked for the Hebrews, worked literally to death, baby boys thrown into the Nile, mothers that sunk into depression and probably even suicidal. It couldn't have been more bleak. I doubt that any of us have been in a worse situation. Certainly we all face our dark hours, but compared to this, you must admit our dark hours would pale in comparison. But look what God is doing. In the midst of all the suffering in this the earliest of Jewish pogroms, God has plucked out a savior, drawn him out of the slaughter, and set him in the safest place in the land, in the house of Pharaoh. It reminds us of a verse in the last chapter of Genesis. ²⁰ *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.* Genesis 50:20 (NIV)

I don't know if the Hebrews thought anything of it. They may have even been upset that the one surviving boy was adopted and being taught the ways of the Egyptians. It is usually impossible for us to know what God is up to. We look at our situations and come up with dire conclusions, ones that are usually completely wrong, because it is hard to even imagine the plan that God has set in action. (Isaiah 55:8) What is God doing in our country, in our church, or in your life? Well, the Holy Spirit might reveal it to you, but more often than not I find I even misinterpret that.

Commented [notes9]: Isaiah 55:8 (NIV)
8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.

There is one thing you can count on, however. God is always true to His character. (Malachi 3:6) In spite of the ruin that sin wreaks, God is at work in hearts and lives, raising up the very answer to our desperate situations, drawing us out of impossible situations and setting His plan in motion. (Jeremiah 32:17) Do you believe it? Really? Are you applying that truth?

Commented [notes10]: Malachi 3:6 (NIV)
6 "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

Commented [notes11]: Jeremiah 32:17 (NIV)
¹⁷ "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. Jeremiah 32:17 (NIV)
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We have a book that tells a similar story over and over and over again. In the midst of worldwide judgment there is Noah. During the fall of the nation there is a Jeremiah. In the hopeless captivity there is a Nehemiah and an Ezra. Under the

oppression of Rome, and even under a much greater oppression, our enslavement of sin, there is Jesus. But what about today? Is our situation hopeless? As long as there is God, and people with faith, then there is hope. Jesus already won the victory! Think of how the Jews had just suffered the worse persecution in their history when they were miraculously granted the restoration of their nation, 1900 years after they had lost their land. (Deuteronomy 30:4) Think of how the iron curtain seemed like an impossibility and nuclear war the inevitable outcome of the arms race, and overnight the situation was transformed. The Gospel poured like a flood past what was once the iron curtain and into all of Russia. Nothing is too hard for God! (Jeremiah 32:27) Today we think that there is no solution to Iran or radical Islam. God will have His way. (Ezekiel 12:25)

Commented [notes12]: Deuteronomy 30:4 (NIV)
4 Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back.

Commented [notes13]: Jeremiah 32:27 (NIV)
27 "I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"

This does not mean it will be easy, but that God has a plan that is set in motion and all the forces of hell, all their evil men and angels cannot stop God. (Psalm 2:4) The cry of a baby changed the future of a nation! Think about that. God can use anything to turn the course of mankind and reveal His glory. (1Corinthians 1:27)

Commented [notes14]: Ezekiel 12:25 (NIV)
25 But I the LORD will speak what I will, and it shall be fulfilled without delay. For in your days, you rebellious house, I will fulfill whatever I say, declares the Sovereign LORD."

Exodus 2:10 (ESV) ¹⁰ *When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."* It is the Hebrew verb, "to draw out", but for what purpose. Moses is a picture of all God's children who are drawn out of the world system to be God's servants. The very idea of holiness is to be set apart or drawn out for God's use. It is the call of God upon every life. *"Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, and I will be a Father to you, and you will be my people."* 2Corinthians 6:17

Commented [notes15]: Psalms 2:4 (ESV)
4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.

Commented [notes16]: 1 Corinthians 1:27 (ESV)
27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

The Princess knew some Hebrew to give him the name *Mashah*, thinking it meant to draw out, but her Hebrew wasn't that good. *Mashah* is better translated "one who draws out of". She unknowingly named him for the destiny he would live out. Just as he was drawn out of the water, so he would be the "one who draws out of" Egypt and through the Red Sea the people of God. God is in the details.

Mose is Egyptian for "born of". We see it in the names Thutmose or Rameses, which means Thuth or Ra has given birth to him. The name has a double etymology (Hebrew/Egyptian) adding to the historical credence.

Moses was nursed in the Hebrew camp probably at least to the age of 3, and you can be sure that Jochabed told Moses of his true identity and the plight of his people. She surely told him the old stories, creation, the flood, the tower of Babel, the stories of the Patriarchs, and finally of the great Prince Joseph who once ruled the empire of Egypt. Pharaoh was afraid of the Hebrew men, but the biggest danger to his empire was a mother relaying the word of God to a baby.

After being weaned, *he "was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). This was the finest training the world then had to offer—a first-class secular education. We know that from the time of Thutmose III (middle of the fifteenth century B.C.) it was customary for foreign-born princes to be reared and educated in the Egyptian court. The "children of the nursery," they were called; and as a child of the nursery, Moses was trained in linguistics, mathematics, astronomy, architecture,*

music, medicine, law, and the fine art of diplomacy. In other words, he was being trained for Pharaoh's overthrow right under Pharaoh's nose! - Preaching the Word – Exodus He was a boy caught between two cultures, but he was also a boy in the hands of Almighty God. (Proverbs 21:1)

Commented [notes17]: Proverbs 21:1 (ESV)
1 The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.

What does this short passage speak to us today? Your situation may be unique and God may be addressing a situation in your life that no one else is aware of, telling you to trust Him. He is at work. (Hebrews 4:13) The situation may look desperate, but God has a plan. He is working even now to take what the enemy of our soul meant for evil and turning it to something that will grow us. That is why the Scriptures tell us to, ² *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,* ³ *for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.* ⁴ *And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* James 1:2-4 (ESV) And again, ... *we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,* ⁴ *and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,* ⁵ *and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.* Romans 5:3-5 (ESV)

Commented [notes18]: Hebrews 4:13 (NIV)
13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

How could God allow suffering? Do you have a better idea? Careful with your answer. Maybe a better question is, "Why does man choose evil with its inevitably painful consequences?" Or how about this question, "Why does God so patiently put up with us and allow us to go on?" The answer is that He is not willing that any should perish. (2Peter 3:9)

Commented [notes19]: 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)
9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Whatever your situation, or however you see the world today, know that God is at work in ways we can't comprehend. We should grieve at the consequences of sin. God does. But we should also have hope, for every story of history has some kind of good that comes out of the darkness, some surprise that develops to change lives and turn people to faith in God. He is at work in all the darkness man has brought on himself. (Romans 8:28) You can trust Him. Have hope. Even now God is moving in some way we do not imagine, in the route a princess takes to her bath, in floating basket, in the cry of a baby, in the watching sister, in the Bible stories a mother tells her child. God will have His glorious way in the earth. (Romans 11:33) No wonder the prophet would call God's incarnation Immanuel. In this great story of the Hebrew people, He was Immanuel. Through the whole story He is Immanuel. Since man was formed He has been and ever will be God with us.

Commented [notes20]: Romans 8:28 (NIV)
28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Commented [notes21]: Romans 11:33 (ESV)
33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

Our Savior was also born in poverty and under a death penalty. Herod first tried to kill Jesus secretly, asking the Magi to return and reveal where they find Him. When Herod failed, like Pharaoh before him, he came out openly and ordered his soldiers kill all the baby boys in Bethlehem. (Matthew 2:16) And where did God send the one boy He rescued to protect Him? It's the same place He sent Moses, Egypt. Is it all just coincidence, or is God repeating His-story so that we will see Him on the throne of Heaven working out His plan in the midst of this world's tragedies. Our Savior has come to draw us out of this world's system into the Kingdom of God. He is the reality of which Moses was just a shadow. (Hebrews 3:3) He draws us through the waters of baptism, and through the wilderness of this life into the Promised Land. And He did it in a way we would never imagine, the cross!

Commented [notes22]: Matthew 2:16 (ESV)
16 Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

Commented [notes23]: Hebrews 3:3 (ESV)
3 For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.