

Grandma Moses Exodus 2:1-10 ZCC 11.10.13

1 A man of the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi as his wife. 2 The woman conceived, and bore a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. 3 When she could no longer hide him, she took a papyrus basket for him, and coated it with tar and with pitch. She put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank. 4 His sister stood far off, to see what would be done to him. 5 Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe at the river. Her maidens walked along by the riverside. She saw the basket among the reeds, and sent her servant to get it. 6 She opened it, and saw the child, and behold, the baby cried. She had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." 7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Should I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?" 8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." The maiden went and called the child's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away, and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." The woman took the child, and nursed it. 10 The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses,* and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

In one of the most famous Andy Griffith episodes of all times, Opie manages to kill a songbird with his new slingshot. Once Andy finds out what he did, he explains to Opie that the bird's nest of babies will die without a mother and Opie raises with baby birds—but ultimately has to let them go.

When I was a teenager, we found a fawn and we bottle fed it for some time, but once it began to eat solid food we had to let it go for its own good.

After all, they are wild animals and if we try to keep them in a box, it may kill them—at the very least, they were not created to live that way—but were created to live free.

Sometimes we have to give something up for its own good. If you haven't done it, it is hard to describe the mixture of sadness and joy that comes with doing that particular right thing.

In the scripture we just read, we find a mother that must have felt those emotions—only squared or even cubed—multiplied many times over.

Pharaoh was intimidated by the Hebrew slaves. He was afraid that they would overrun his people and he decreed that the boy children would be killed. Moses' mother understood that in order for Moses to have even a chance to live, she had to let him go. There were no adoption agencies or social services. In order to save her child, she had to give him up—but not into the loving arms of adoptive parents. She had to set him adrift on the mighty Nile River—full of whirlpools and crocodiles and lions and tigers and bears, oh my! Well, whirlpools and crocodiles. All she had was a boat made of reeds and a prayer and faith in her God.

In last week's sermon, I talked about some of the most important fathers and mothers of the Hebrew faith—those who followed God and who were faithful when we looked at the book of Hebrews and Moses' parents were listed.

Today's passage tells us that the reed boat floated, Moses' mother's prayer was answered, and her faith was honored. As we look at the characteristics of Jochebed's faith—we can find several good examples we can use as we try to teach our children and grandchildren to honor God.

Her name isn't given in our passage, but elsewhere we see her name is Jochebed—mother of Aaron, Miriam, and Moses. Her husband's name was Amram.

Under more normal circumstances, she would have been elevated to high status along with other important women in the bible such as Mary, Delilah, Sarah, Rachael and others. Her son was the lawgiver—the one who freed the slaves. He was the leader of the Exodus from Egypt.

But hers were not normal circumstances. When he was a newborn, Moses was doomed to die by the time he was 3 months old.

Verse two says that he was a beautiful or goodly child—well-formed or perfect. Scripture tells us that he was a special child and Jewish traditions says that it was obvious, even as a baby, that he was chosen by God. We aren't told of any angelic visitation, but maybe his mother "just knew" there were great things in his future.

She may have hid him in the root cellar where the food was stored or maybe in the stable under their living area. Tradition says that the soldiers came to search for male babies every three months, If so, he was under three months old when she had to let him go.

It actually isn't clear what the little boat of basket was made of—it may have been reeds or bullrushes or even acacia wood. What matters is that Jochebed did what she could with what she had. The boat was not waterproof so she used tar on the outside and probably clay on the inside to keep out the water. The craft she made was pretty fragile and the river was a dangerous place.

She placed the little boat in the edge of the river, in the reeds. Maybe she had a plan because it was common for royalty to bathe in the sacred water of the Nile. There were religious rituals attached to these baths and there were shrines—even areas protected from crocodiles by sharpened stakes. It would have been normal for the daughter of a god-king to come to the river for a ritual bath.

Again, from tradition, we understand that she was married but childless—maybe Moses' mother knew that and hoped above hope that Moses would become part of the royal family. That seems possible, since her older daughter Miriam stayed nearby to watch.

Certainly God's hand was in this—but also the hand of a brave and faithful mother.

So, on her evening outing—with friends and servants—the princess found this Hebrew child and against the orders and wishes of the Pharaoh, she decided to take him in.

Y'all know what it is like when someone brings a baby into a crowd of people. I'm sure they gathered and ooo'd and ahh'd and talked about how cute he was—and it seems that Miriam sort of joined into the crowd. When it was clear the princess was smitten—she asked if she could find a wet-nurse and of course she went and found her their own mother.

Jochebed probably nursed Moses for at least two years, but it could have been much longer. She got to have him near and would have been paid for her services.

As she raised and nurtured and taught him during those first years, she planted the seed, no matter how small, for a future call from God. Through these faithful parents—this faithful mother—came the exodus and the trip to the Promised Land. Through them came the priestly line of the Hebrews. Through her faith and hope, the world was changed forever.

So, as I promised, I want to look quickly at the characteristics of her faith and how they might apply in our lives and the lives of the children around us.

- 1. She recognized the hand of God in her son. Maybe it was more than just the mothering instinct. Maybe it was clear that something was special in Moses—but you and I can follow her example by looking for what is special in every child in our lives—not just our children but also our grandchildren—and even the children we know in community and church. Keep our eyes open and nurture that specialness.**

- 2. She was faithful to her belief. She believed he was special and she put herself and her family at risk by hiding him. Certainly she would have prayed and sought God's face constantly. You and I can follow her example by staying close to God—believing in him and that his hand is on our children. Using our relationships to God and them to help ensure God's plans for them succeed.**

- 3. As I mentioned last week—she put feet on her prayers. She didn't just pray, "God please save him!" She formed a plan and put it into action. We can put aside money for college. We can believe in our children and actively nurture them—we can help them be all they can.**

- 4. In the time she had with him—I believe Jochebed trained Moses in the proper way to go—how to be. Any basic moral and spiritual teaching their family provided was ultimately enough to help Moses become what God intended.**

We don't control the future, but we can teach them and guide them and tell them—and especially SHOW them our relationship to God through our deeds.

5. Jochebed ultimately was willing to turn Moses over to the providence of God. She actually did that twice—at the Nile and then when it came time for him to go permanently to the house of Pharaoh. She trusted God to guide him and keep him safe. We also can believe in God's hand and allow the children in our lives to leave the nest and live out the life God has for them. We can best serve our own children and grandchildren by working ourselves out of a job.

- 1. Watch for the special nature and for God's hand in every child's life.**
- 2. Stay close to God and to them.**
- 3. Put feet on that faith in God and faith in those children.**
- 4. Train them up well—and the best way to do that is by living our faith in front of them every day.**
- 5. Let them go—where ever they go, God is already there.**