

Exodus 1:8-2:10

“Risk to the Rescue”

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The Paraphrase Version of the Scripture Reading:

Introductory Piece: This fall, we are going to listen to the Bible stories about how God freed the Hebrew people from enslavement. The book of Exodus tells us about their leader, Moses. Today the story tells us about when he was born.

The Story:

A new king came to power in Egypt, and he didn't remember how important the Hebrew people and their ancestor, Joseph, had been to his country. The king became jealous of the Hebrews and afraid that they would take over, so he declared that they were no longer free. This king made them slaves. As they worked on Egyptian building projects, he oppressed them and made their lives very hard indeed!

Things got worse and worse. Eventually, the King ordered that his citizens should get rid of the Hebrews. But God was with them, and the birth helpers disobeyed the King's command. They rescued children instead. The more the King hurt the Hebrews, the more they increased in numbers and strength.

There were two Hebrew parents who followed God and didn't obey the King's command. The mother saved their baby by hiding him. When he got too big to hide, she took a risk to rescue him. She made a safe basket that could float on the water. She put him into the basket and floated it down the Nile River so that her baby could be discovered by the King's daughter and cared for. This mom also sent his older sister to keep watch. It worked just as she hoped. The Egyptian princess found him, took him out of the basket and fell in love with him. She called him "Moses" and adopted him as her son. He was safe, and when Moses grew up, he obeyed God and saved his people.

The Children's Message and Activity:

Good Morning, children! This story tells us how the baby Moses was rescued. His parents put him in a special basket and launched it onto the Nile River in hopes that he would be found and cared for. His mother, his sister, and the Egyptian princess all played their part in keeping him alive.

Can you think of *other people* who rescue others when they are in trouble? (You can speak up and tell me...adults if necessary...) These are doing what is right in God's eyes.

Kids, while I am talking to the adults for a few minutes, I'd like you to draw a picture of one of these people. You might draw a picture of a firefighter, or a nurse, or

one of the women in the Bible story, or one of baby Moses in the basket. Later, we will have a time for you to show and tell us about your picture. Okay?

The Adult Sermon:

Adults, when you and I think of those who rescue others, we probably recall stories of bravery from a long time ago, such as in WWII and the Danish Elsinore Sewing Club; they covertly transported Jews to neutral Sweden in small fishing boats, or the story of Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. However, we can also point to stories that were in the news just this week: 1) Sergeant First Class Thomas P. Payne, awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for rescuing 75 Kurdish prisoners of ISIS in Iraq; 2) heroes from the tragedy of 9/11; and 3) in real time, we are watching the firefighters and volunteers battling horrible wildfires in the West.

I want us to remember that God's rescuers take risks in order to save others.

In the case of today's story from Exodus, the stakes were very high for the rescuers. Egypt had become afraid and jealous of the 'Other.' They pointed anti-Semitic fingers at the Hebrews, a.k.a. "Israelites" as their population increased in the country. Egypt also wanted to build storehouses in Pithom and Rameses as a symbol of the Empire's power, but they didn't want to pay laborers! So they probably blamed the Hebrews for the country's problems and then forced them, over time, into slavery! In any case, oppression turned into genocide. No, you're right, if your goal is to have slave labor, and you order the killing of the next generation, your policy is crazy. But racism is not rational!

Undoubtedly, during this time there were Egyptians who were caught up in their own pursuits and were oblivious to the evil their government was carrying out, others who probably gave their leaders the benefit of the doubt, as well as those that enforced the system, *but the Bible story in Exodus focuses in upon the few* who resisted the policy and did what was right in *God's* eyes, using nonviolent, creative avenues to rescue the vulnerable.

Most of the characters who took this risk are not named in this story, but the two Hebrew midwives are: Shiphrah and Puah. Quietly and systematically, they defied Pharaoh, and probably rescued hundreds of male infants. We don't know if they lost *their* lives as a result. Then there are the parents who cleverly hid their baby as long as they could, and the mother who devised an escape plan for her son. There is no way she could have known for sure that it would work, and, think about it, her daughter could have gotten in trouble had she been caught watching in the background!

Moreover, it was a great risk to hope that the Egyptian princess would not turn this Hebrew baby in to the authorities, but love him! The princess also had to directly disobey her father's order and somehow convince him to allow her to mother Moses!

Consider the risks these people took to do what was right!

I remember how our former Associate Conference Minister, Wendy Vanderhart, used to ask church groups: "What would you do now if you were being brave?" In other words, if the church is a rescue station (and I think you can make a good case), **what risks are you and RCC willing to take for whom, or what, and why?**

This last week, a colleague and friend of mine posted a quote on Facebook that really haunts me – in a good way – as a follower of Jesus Christ. The speaker was Alan Paton, South African author and anti-apartheid activist. You may have heard of his novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Paton said: “When I go up there, which is my intention, the Big Judge will say to me, ‘Where are your wounds?’ And if I say I haven’t any, He will say, ‘Was there nothing to fight for?’ [and Paton pauses:] I couldn’t face that question.”