

Men's Night – October 2023  
Exodus 1:8—2:10

The heroes in this episode are all female. These priceless women stood up to death, stood up to Pharaoh, the merchant of death. Moses' mother and sister, Pharaoh's daughter and her handmaids all band together, knowingly or unknowingly, to protect a baby, to protect and save a baby who would grow to be one the greatest men this world has ever known. Pharaoh wanted baby boys to be drowned in the Nile. If ever there was a demonic edict from a man whose word was not to be defied, this is it. In addition to these heroic women saving one boy, the Hebrew midwives defied Pharaoh and his deathly decree. Shiphrah and Puah; they feared God and would not do as the king of Egypt commanded them. Even before the New Testament words were written, the principle was etched in the midwives' hearts: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

"The rulers of this world rage in vain. They are ultimately impotent. Pharaoh struts and postures but he cannot command midwives. Satan paces to and fro. He seeks someone to devour but the chain around his neck is fixed to a cross sunk deep in the bedrock of creation. He can harm us none" (Petersen). Life, not death, is the dynamic unleashed in this creation. God has unleashed it. By the power of His Word, by the Life, Death, and Resurrection of His Son, God has unleashed a reality that has swept over this world, swept over you. Moses, the infant deliverer, was drawn out of that river by women. A basket, an ark, carried Moses down the Nile to a woman who would take pity on him. Moses was drawn out of the river that Pharaoh had intended as an instrument of death. A woman saved him.

Pharaoh would have his own encounter with water. Ten plagues were not enough to bring Pharaoh to his knees, not enough to bring the king of Egypt to repentance. Pharaoh hardened his heart and God returned the favor. You, who would drown My sons, come into the Red Sea and discover the death you are so eager to dispense. It is a strange and awful time when the governor of this state appoints a woman who hungers for the death of the unborn to the office of Senator. Pharaoh's progeny are legion. Your mother carried you in the basket of her womb but God is the One who has given you life. A free gift, you are the recipient of God's life-giving love. Grace and Life were the handmaidens of Pharaoh's daughter who pulled Moses from the Nile. Grace and Life were in the waters of your baptism which placed you in this ark of Christ's church. The old, sinful nature was drowned with all sins and evil desires and a new man was brought forth, patterned after Christ, the eternal NEW MAN.

Mary was the heroic woman who put her life in the hands of the Almighty. "I am the Lord's servant; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Lois and Eunice are the ones who taught a young Timothy the wisdom inherent in the Holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:14-15). Women serve in a multitude of ways, glorifying God with their humility, their devotion, their hands and their hearts. Hannah gave her son Samuel to the Lord and the service of His people. In grieving devotion, Mary Magdalene would have anointed Jesus' corpse with ointment, but resurrection changed mourning into rejoicing. Deborah provided the strength of conviction for Israel as they encountered their enemies. She was a judge of God's people, a ruler, a heroine of faith. Ruth is numbered in the genealogy of Christ. She consoled her mother-in-law when Naomi was in great distress. God's love worked through Ruth to uplift the downtrodden.

So many women around us are instruments of God's service to us. Women's struggles are often not our struggles. Being alert to what our women folk go through is part of your calling to love them as Christ loves the church. Godly women value life. Godly women endeavor to prosper children. Women's nurturing nature is a marvel for us to praise God for. Hebrew midwives are an icon that is very much needed today. Their daughters are in our congregation. Ultimately, the Red Sea was red with Pharaoh's blood. The Seed of the Woman crushed the Serpent's head when He was nailed to the cross. God's Messianic Champion is the One who made the water of our baptism red with His blood, making us holy by His sacrifice, making us holy by His washing, making us holy by His ministry of Word and Sacrament.

The ark of Christ's church is carrying us toward the harbor of heaven. We are carried along the river of time by grace and love. We dwell secure where the Word is preached in all of its truth and purity and the sacraments are administered according to Christ's command. Our Deliverer, Christ the King, has brought us out of a land of slavery and death and has prepared a place for us at the marriage banquet of heaven. The Hebrew midwives will be there, Shiphrah and Puah. Miriam, Moses' sister, and Jochebed, Moses' mother will be there. Pharaoh's daughter, I suspect she is there. They all saved Moses in one way or another. Moses typifies Christ, the Great Deliverer. He conquered death by dying. He justified us all by rising on Easter. To Him be glory forever and ever.