

McCabe United Methodist Church

You Too!

Exodus 3:1-15: September 1, 2013 (Labor Day)

Pastor Rick Fossum

Our story today from Exodus is one of those interesting Bible stories that has a lot to say to people. People back then and people today. It's a story about a man named Moses and the Hebrew people and God.

During the time of this story, life for the Hebrew people wasn't good. They were slaves living in Egypt. They were on the lowest rung of humanity.

To make matters worse, the Egyptian Pharaoh was worried about having too many Hebrew slaves. He could see the day when they could cause real problems for Egypt. He did something drastic. It was his idea of *birth control*. The Pharaoh sent this order throughout the land of Egypt: **“Every Hebrew boy who is born must be thrown into the Nile River and drowned, but let every girl live.”**

It was during this time that Moses was born. His parents were Hebrew making Moses one of those Hebrew babies.

Now, Moses had a wise mother. She hid her baby Moses for the first three months of his life and used that time to plot and plan her next move. She came up with a brilliant plan. She took her baby son and placed him in a basket and set him in the tall reeds along the Nile River. She knew that the Pharaoh's daughter often went to that part of the Nile to bathe.

Sure enough, the Pharaoh's daughter went to that part of the Nile and discovered the baby Moses laying in the basket. The baby Moses was crying as babies will often do. He was hungry. The Pharaoh's daughter had compassion for him. The plan was unfolding perfectly.

The second part of the plan was this: Moses had an older sister, Marian. She had been hiding in the tall grass watching and waiting for the right moment. The moment came while Moses was crying. Marian got up from his hiding place and walked up to the Pharaoh's daughter and said, **“Excuse me. I hear a baby crying. Do you need some help? Do you want me to go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?”**

It was pretty clever. The Pharaoh's daughter told Marian, **“Yes, go and find a Hebrew woman to nurse my baby.”**

Can you guess whom she found? His mother! If you can't see the hand of God in this story, you're not looking very hard.

And so, Moses was saved from drowning. He had the best of two worlds. His mother would nurse and feed him, comfort him and teach him the Hebrew ways.

He also got to live in the Pharaoh's palace, eat from the Pharaoh's table, receive an

education from the Pharaoh's educators. Plus, he reaped all the benefits reserved for royalty.

Not bad for a Hebrew boy once condemned to die.

Fast forward twenty or thirty years, Moses was a grown man still living the life of royalty. One day, he happened to walk by a construction site where he saw Hebrew slaves working and working hard.

While he was watching them, he saw an Egyptian guard beating one of the slaves. He remembered the words his mother had taught him, **"Son, the Hebrew people are your people. You were born a Hebrew. I raised you to be Hebrew."**

I don't think Moses ever knew why he did what he did that day, but he struck the Egyptian guard, the one beating the Hebrew slave, killed him and hid his body in the sand hoping no one would find out what he did.

They found out. Everybody found out including the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh ordered Moses to be killed, but Moses escaped. He escaped to a far away land called Midian. In Midian, he found a wife, settled down and became a sheep farmer.

Once more, fast forward a few more years. By now Moses was almost eighty years old. Life was going well for him.

Meanwhile, back in Egypt, the Hebrew people were still groaning under the weight of slavery. Life was still hard for them. Their prayers to God for help kept getting louder and louder.

One day, Moses was watching his sheep. He was a long way from home when he happened to see a bush on fire. He wasn't surprised because fires often happened in the desert because of lightening strikes or when travelers were careless with their campfires.

But, this fire was different. The bush wasn't burning up! It should have burned up, but it didn't. Moses walked closer and said to himself, **"This is odd. Why doesn't this bush burn up?"**

And then it happened. God used this time in history to tap Moses on the shoulder. **"Moses,"** God said from within the burning bush.

"Yes," Moses replied. **"Here I am."**

"Don't come any closer," God ordered. **"And take off your sandals because you're standing on holy ground."**

God went on. **"Moses, I have seen the suffering of the Hebrew people. I have heard their cries. I know how hard life is for them in Egypt. And so,"** God announced, **"I have come to rescue them."**

Moses didn't know what to say. He was still Hebrew. He still cared for the Hebrew people, but he had been away from Egypt for a long time.

“Well God, it's about time you did something.” Moses might have said to God. **“I don't mean to criticize you, but you let them suffer long enough. But, I guess helping them now is better than never. Good luck.”**

This is the part of the story that I really love. Right here, God said something that almost caused Moses to fall over. God pointed a finger at Moses and said, **“And oh, by the way, I'm sending YOU to rescue the Hebrew people. I want you to help me set them free!”**

“What?” Moses might have said. **“You can't be serious. I'm a busy person. I just can't drop everything and help you. What about my family? What about my sheep business? And in case you haven't noticed, I'm not a spring chicken anymore. I'm an old man. Come on God, can't you find someone else?”**

You know the rest of the story. Moses answered God's call. He returned to Egypt where eventually he helped God free the Hebrew people.

I've always liked this story. It's interesting, isn't it? But, you might ask, what does this story have to do with you and me and the price of tea in China?

The answer is this: God uses people, people exactly like you and me, to get things done. I don't why God wants to use us, but that's the way it is. From Abraham, Isaac, Jacob to Moses, from David to Jeremiah, from the Apostles to Paul, from John Wesley to you and me, it's how God gets things done.

God can still do miracles today, but mostly if God wants to free someone or help someone or support someone or love someone, it's almost always through people like us.

Someone once said, **“God can do little without us, as we can do little without God.”**

God can't or won't build a building or a road or an airplane, but God does give us the ideas and the materials and the skills to get those jobs done. It's how God works.

Do you remember the story of Antonio Stradivarius? Stradivarius was a maker of violins. Expensive and well-built violins. Mr. Stradivarius once said, **“When a master violinist holds one of my violins in his hand, he will be glad that Stradivarius lived. For while God gives them the skill to play my violins, God chose me to make them. God could not make Antonio Stradivarius violins without Antonio.”**

This is how the Kingdom of God gets built. It gets built through you and me, and through churches like ours. God depends on our help.

What job does God have for you around this church or community or your neighborhood or your school? Do you know? Are you listening?

God depends on all of us and not just a few of us.