

## TAKE TIME OUT - *Pastoral Retreat*

**Sunday Scriptures:** 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2020     **Revd Janice Morgan**

### **Exodus 1:8-22** *A corrupt king imposes corrupt leadership*

<sup>8</sup>Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. <sup>9</sup>He said to his people, 'Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. <sup>10</sup>Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.' <sup>11</sup>Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labour. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. <sup>12</sup>But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. <sup>13</sup>The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, <sup>14</sup>and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labour. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them. <sup>15</sup>The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, <sup>16</sup>'When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.' <sup>17</sup>But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. <sup>18</sup>So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, 'Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?' <sup>19</sup>The midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.' <sup>20</sup>So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. <sup>21</sup>And because the midwives feared God, He gave them families. <sup>22</sup>Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, 'Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.'

### **Scripture Reflection:**

This is only half of the lectionary reading for this week but it has a very important lesson to teach. The next half begins the better known story of Moses, but I have chosen to focus on the precursor to that story, which reveals some very important insights. There is a new king, ignorant of Israelite history and consumed with jealousy. This king is a greedy, power hungry control freak! We see God's people oppressed, but, despite their circumstances, they are still blessed by God. We hear about the integrity of two Hebrew midwives who revere God above any earthly king or leader. As a result we gain understanding of God's providence and blessing upon those faithful and True to the Lord and His authority over all.

This Pharaoh was most definitely not of God! He was ruthless and commanded ethnic cleansing by varying degrees. First by ordering others to do his dirty work, demanding the Hebrew midwives turn against their own kind. Many are they who manipulate others into doing or saying things that are contentious or wicked. This kind of person will complain bitterly declaring something should be done or someone should say something and present a reasonable sounding case. They use tools such as emotional persuasion or moral blackmail to spur others into wrongdoing on their behalf. By employing these methods such people absolve themselves from any accountability for the consequences. However, just because someone says something does not mean it is True or make it right. Scripture warns us to 'test' things alongside the Word of God to see if it is True or false. Those tricked by such deception will soon discover that people they respected, trusted and believed will vigorously claim no involvement in what was said or done! This is the work of Satan and those working with him against God and His people. Those who seek to manipulate their own desires cause nothing but heartache and destruction to others. *Have you experienced or witnessed false testimony? Can you think of a time when you were persuaded to do or say something you knew in your heart was not right? Did the Truth come out or was someone left hurting as a result?*

In contrast, the example of these two midwives demonstrates they were indeed God's people, which also made them targets for the devil's mischief. Remember, the closer we are to God the greater the threat we are to the devil. These two women were just going about their everyday tasks when confronted with a dangerous dilemma and their response can teach us a great deal. Firstly, we are told that they 'feared God', which means they knew what they were being ordered to do was wrong. Secondly, they obeyed the Word of God over and above the command of corrupt authority. Thirdly, their obedience to God gave them the courage to ignore the command of the king and refuse to take a human life, something only God has the authority to give or take away. Lastly, by remaining faithful to God, they gained the wisdom to avoid being soiled by corruption, thereby saving their souls. As a result, the Israelites were protected and multiplied, and these two faithful women gained the divine blessing of families of their own. Such as these remain faithful to God, His Word and His will, no matter what, and truly work to fulfil His purpose and build His Kingdom.

We know that the only way to stop a bully is to stand up to them, but we also know this will often come at great cost to ourselves. However, if no one ever speaks up for Truth and none can be found to serve Justice, nothing will ever change and the bullies of the world will keep on destroying as they please. Every so often we hear about a 'whistle-blower' who has the courage to stand against corruption and expose wrongdoing. Sadly, that person usually suffers great persecution and false accusation in the process of doing what is right. It is to these brave souls that we owe our democratic freedom, some made famous through it, but many remaining unknown. *Can you think of some examples of those who stood for Truth and right at great expense to themselves? Does this challenge you as a Christian to stand up for Truth and right against those seeking to do or speak wrongdoing?*

Through all this prequel to the birth of God's chosen deliverer of His people at that time, Moses, we see the spiritual struggle between good and evil. History demonstrates that this struggle does not cease and never will until the return of Jesus Christ, God's Son. However, that does not mean that we give in and give up, or turn turtle and claim ignorance, quite the reverse! The king of Egypt refused to accept God and His people and spitefully murdered the innocent. Throughout history we have seen the rise and fall of other similar dictator's hell bent on murderous evil. We will not see the last of them, in one guise or another, until the Lord returns to deliver us. We have also seen throughout history those raised up by God to protect and deliver His people from such dictatorial bullies, time and time again. Let us thank the Lord for their courage and faithfulness.

The history of God's relationship with His people, alongside the history of world events, proves beyond all doubt that God needs people of faith. People full of the Spirit; those prepared to nail their colours to the mast and stand in faith for Truth, justice and righteousness. As did Martin Luther, when in 1517, he nailed his ninety-five theses' of theological correction to the door of the established church of his time: *"I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen."* As did a more recent man of faith who shared the same name and stood against injustice. Satan will not give up corrupting Christ's Church and attacking God's people until he is confined once and for all within the fiery pit of hell with no reprieve. Therefore, we must continue to stand together in Truth against all injustices to ensure Christ finds a remnant people of faith when He returns. *Where do you find spiritual support and encouragement? Who do you observe as being of God?* We would do well to seek out those who demonstrate they are God's people, like the Hebrew midwives of Egypt. Amen!

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**Hymn/Song: BURNING LIKE FIRE**  
**CD: IONA: The Very Best Treasures Track 5:**

There is a path to follow  
There is a dream to hold  
And there are words of wisdom  
For me in this all  
I need the truth to guide me  
I need a light to fall on me  
From Heaven

*Chorus:...*

*Burning like fire  
Falling like rain  
I need to hear your voice again  
Burning like fire  
Falling like rain  
I need to hear your voice again*

I am only human, but I have the desire  
For Your divine anointing  
To start a holy fire  
I need the Word to keep me  
And I need a dove to fall on me  
From heaven

*Chorus:...*

Oh, in times of trouble  
You will cover me  
Oh, in times of darkness  
You will help me see

*Chorus:...*

*Repeat:...*

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**Poem: I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS** ©Janice Morgan-1996  
Based on [Matthew 28:20](#)

God is forever with you ALWAYS,  
No matter what is said or done,  
God still loves you this He says,  
A battle fought, a victory won,  
That you and He might be as one.

Within your heart His spirit dwells,  
Convicting you of every wrong,  
But God's heart with forgiveness swells,  
When you cry out repentance song,  
Then angels sing in heavenly throng.

God is always with you FOREVER,  
No matter what you're going through,  
God loves and gives and will never,

Give up the smallest part of you,  
His love, the cunning serpent slew!

Forever and always God is with YOU,  
No matter who or what you are,  
God's Spirit tells you what to do,  
The evil one will maim and mar,  
But God's love is stronger by far.

Always and forever with you is GOD,  
No soul is made He does not know,  
For each is formed from His rich sod,  
He, through all from the start does flow,  
And in His likeness helps all grow.

No trial or trauma will succeed,  
In keeping you from God's pure love,  
A broken heart, an aching need,  
Will not be missed by eyes above,  
God mends and feeds with gentle love.

No open wound or heart laid bare,  
Lies beyond the reach of God's skill,  
He will with expert touch and care,  
Your frame with strength and healing fill,  
With trust, rest in His perfect Will.

If life is stopped before it starts,  
Or if you live beyond your years,  
Love in full measure God imparts,  
To soothe all sorrows, calm all fears,  
Heaven knows no pain and dries all tears.

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***Prayer:...***

Father God, help us to remember that You alone are in control and You have a plan. Lord Jesus Christ, remind us of Your life, death and resurrection that we might find strength and comfort in Your presence. Holy Spirit, bless us with Your wisdom and power to stand against the bullies of this world. **Amen!**