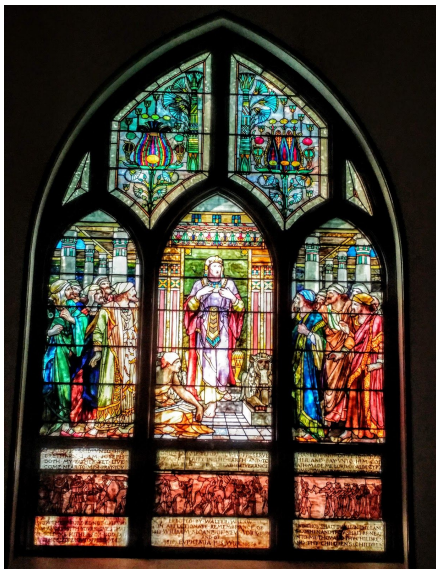


Moses In the Flags
By Rev. Todd Farnsworth
Exodus 2: 3-10



3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket[a] for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. 4 His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. 5 Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. 6 She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said. 7 Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" 8 "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. 10 When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses,[b] saying, "I drew him out of the water."

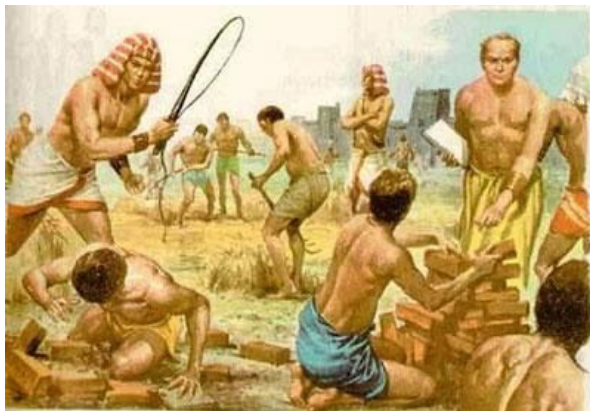


Our story actually begins with this window. It's the story of Joseph in Egypt, working side by side with Pharaoh, managing the crops and coffers so that during the time of famine, not only all of Egypt is cared for by God, but Israel is welcomed into Egypt to share in the bounty that Joseph has imagined and brought to life

with God's blessings. We'll follow that story more closely in future weeks, but our story begins with a change in Pharaohs. We begin with a change in Egypt's leadership that is less interested in working side by side with the people of Israel (albeit in a corrupt system!), and more concerned with dominating, showing strength and power to the people of Israel. The Book of Exodus (the book that describes how God's people were claimed by God and liberated from oppression) begins this way:

Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. 9 "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. 10 Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country."

Loyalty was very important to this king. He did not trust the relationships of the past and he did not want to risk losing his control of the people.



11 So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. 12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites 13 and worked them ruthlessly. 14 They made their

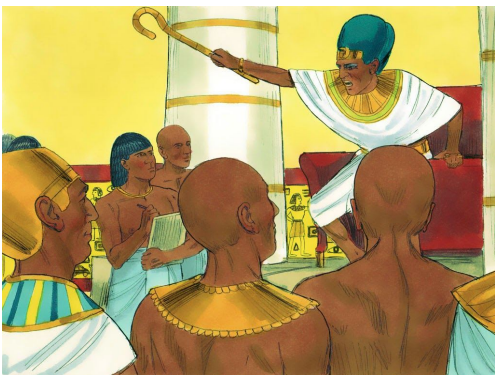
lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

Pharaoh got the people of Egypt to participate in his scheme. He got them to work against their neighbors and friends. He lifted up his allies and left his enemies for dead. But the people of Israel were resilient and they pressed on against the oppression. Here and there people would rise up in opposition to Pharaoh, but they were quickly dispensed with. I imagine it must have felt like a losing battle for survival, despite their faith.



15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, 16 “When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.” 17 The midwives, however, loved

God (more than they feared Pharaoh) and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. They lied to Pharaoh and said, Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give



birth before we arrive.”

These midwives were in the business of helping people. Healing people. Bringing new life to bear in the world. They were faithful and loving. They couldn't participate in Pharaoh's orders. They found a way

around his cruelty. Nonetheless, Pharoah was cruel and suspicious and he ordered all of the people to help him in his cause, He gave this order to all his people: *“Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.”*

Can you imagine a leader who would sort people out not only by nationality but by gender and leave their people to suffer or die? A leader who chose carnage over compassion? If by those criteria now, who would be next?

And that brings us to our window.

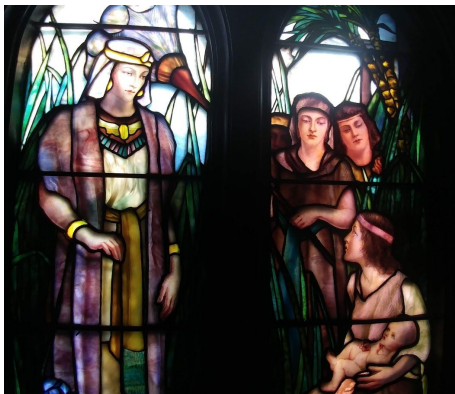
A Levite (read: faithful to God) couple had a baby boy. They had heard about Pharoah’s decree and were afraid for their child’s life, so they hid him away for three months. When he had gotten too big and too loud to conceal anymore (let’s face it, at three months he had a LOT to say!) the mother *got a papyrus basket[a] for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile.*



The mother did the best she could to protect the child, but now he was in God's hands to find his way in the world, as our children eventually *are* in God's hands. I can imagine his voice babbling down the river, making his way over rocks and rills and in and out of the reeds. He probably cried out in protest, "Too fast!" Or "too slow!" Or "I'm hungry!" Bobbing in the current,



winding along through Egypt. He wasn't completely alone. **4** *His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.* I confess that when I look at our window, I think that the shadowy face in the background must be Miriam, the child's sister!



5 *Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. 6 She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him.*

"This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.

Ahh, compassion. God's currency come to life in the currents of the Nile! Pharaoh's daughter should have drowned the child at the moment. She could have brought him back as a prize. But some bit of compassion that her father lacked stirred within her and she felt sorry for the baby. She

heard his cry and wanted to hear more. She felt a compulsion to protect the child from her father's malice!

7 Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" 8 "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him.



Look at this picture/this window. What a powerful group of women. Women who are taking a stand. Women who are making a difference. It reminds me of the Wall of Mom's that has been gathering in Portland, Oregon this past week, standing around the protestors, protecting somebody's children from the assaults of the federal officers who come bearing tear gas and bullets to peaceful protests. The Wall of Moms are women dressed in yellow, linking arms and providing a space for the children to cry out in protest.

10 *When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."*

Drawn out of the water. Drawn out of death to bring new life to his community. He went on to bring God's people Laws that would guide them in their faith journey. He went on to challenge Pharaoh's oppression of God's people in Egypt. He went on to lead God's people out of Egypt's oppression and into a land where they were free. It turns out that Moses' life mattered.

And it's important to remember that none of that would have happened if it hadn't been for the wall of women who stood between him and Pharaoh when Moses was just getting started. None of it would have happened if God's love wasn't bigger than Pharaoh's fear.

Remember this story. Let it carry you through the week and guide you in the days and weeks to come. God's love is bigger. Amen.