

God's At Work

Why am I here? Have you ever asked that question? What is life all about and why am I here? There's a lot of people who really struggle with those kind of questions. They struggle with feelings of insignificance and purposelessness.

If your one of those people I have some good news for you this morning. The very fact that you're asking the questions shows how absolutely unique you really are.

Did you know that human beings are the only animals that ask those kinds of questions? Camels don't trek over sand dunes wondering why am I here? Orangutans don't hang around contemplating their purpose in life. Bears don't lay down for the winter to hibernate wondering about their significance. Dogs don't ponder the mystery of dogness.

Only people wrestle with those things because only people are created in the image of God. We had an intelligent designer who made us as thinking, rational, cognitive beings.

The fact that we ask the questions about the meaning of life shows our uniqueness. It shows that we are different from all of creation. It shows how fearfully and wonderfully made we are.

Every one of us has a special and unique purpose in life. The key is finding that purpose in God. God is at work in our world and in our personal lives.

I'd like us to turn to Exodus 2 this morning. Pg 51

We're in a brand new series on the life of Moses from the book of Exodus. We just started last week as we looked at chapter 1.

God had promised to make a great nation out of the descendants of a man named Abraham. His descendents would be the Jewish people. God established what we call the Abrahamic Covenant.

He promised Abraham 3 things; 1) the land of Israel, 2) a great posterity (the Jewish people), 3) that all nations of the earth would be blessed.

That was a promise that through the Jewish people would come a Savior. 2000

years after God made that covenant with Abraham, a descendant of Abraham's named Jesus of Nazareth was born.

God always fulfills His promises. Through Jesus Christ, and His death on the cross, blessing has come to the whole world. We who are sinners before God can be forgiven through faith in Christ because He suffered for our sins.

The book of Exodus picks up a number of years into the Abrahamic covenant. Abraham has died, along with his son Isaac, Isaac's son Jacob, and Jacob's 12 sons.

The Hebrew people have moved into Egypt and were prospering but the Egyptian Pharaoh decided to enslave them. He feared they might side with Egypt's enemies someday and help overthrow the government.

By chapter 2 the Hebrews had lived in Egypt for over 300 years. They had grown to a well over 1,000,000 people and were persecuted and enslaved by the Egyptians.

Pharaoh had gone so far as to order that every male Jewish baby be thrown into the Nile to die.

That brings us to Chapter 2.

As we see the birth of Moses, the deliverer of the Jewish people, I want us to notice 3 things today.

I. We Are All Created By God For A Special Purpose Read vs 1-2

The people of Israel were identified by their specific forefather. The 12 Sons of Jacob are the forefathers they identified with.

Until the Roman General Titus Flavius Vespasianus destroyed the Jewish temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD every Jewish person knew what tribe he was from.

The Messiah had to be from the tribe of Judah. Both Joseph and Mary were descendants of Judah. Jesus was a descendant of Judah, specifically through the line of King David. That could be proven in Jesus' day because voluminous genealogical records were kept in the temple.

Today no Jewish person can categorically say what tribe he's from since the records were destroyed.

It's assumed that if your last name is Cohen or Levi you're a descendant of Levi. The Levites were the priestly class and the word for "priest" in Hebrew is *kohen*.

A man and a woman from the house of Levi get married.

We know from other portions of Scripture that this man's name is Amram and the woman's name is Jochebed. This couple has to decide between being sexually involved with each other in their marriage, or avoiding it altogether to eliminate the possibility of having a son.

I can't imagine the pressure they were under. What do you do? What would you do?

They probably talked about it, prayed about it, and asked God for a peace about it. But you know something; prayer does not always stop hard choices from having to be made in our lives.

They had to make a hard decision. Finally Jochebed realizes she's pregnant. Now they go through 9 months of struggle wondering whether the baby she's carrying is a son or a daughter.

Finally she delivers a son. I have to believe she did everything within her power to hide the fact that she had given birth to a boy.

I don't know where she hid the child for sure, but I believe that for the first three months of his life, this beautiful baby was passed off as a girl. Jochebed probably made sure she changed the diapers to make sure no one knew the truth. But somehow, somebody must have been watching, and word got to someone who was bitter over their own loss.

You may be in the place of Jochebed this morning. You have done all that you can to help the situation.

Finally she couldn't hide the boy any longer. She has to do something. She's been taught from childhood that Jehovah God cares for His people. That God makes and keeps His promises.

But all she can see is the heartache and sorrow of her people. All she knows is the Egyptians are oppressing her people and slaughtering boy babies.

What is she going to do? Her faith tells her one thing but her experience seems to contradict her faith.

Read vs 3-4

It seems to me that almost every sermon or commentary on this passage makes some assumptions.

Almost everything I read preparing for this message made a big deal about Jochebed's faith in putting the baby in the basket and floating him in the river.

I don't know if that was a step of faith. The Bible doesn't say it was a step of faith.

In fact, look at the 2 NT passages that mention this.

Turn to Acts 7:20 pg 971 Read vs 17-21

Two things here: First the baby Moses was "well pleasing to God," we'll come back to that in a minute or two, second, there's no mention on Moses' parents' faith.

Now let's look at the second passage. Heb 11:23 pg 1069

Read vs 23

The significant thing about Hebrews 11 is, it's all about people's expressions of faith. This is the great faith chapter. Look what's highlighted: Not the basket but hiding the child in the house for 3 months. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that putting Moses in the basket was an act of faith.

In fact, back in Acts 7 it says Pharaoh made *them expose their babies, so that they might not live*. Then it says, *But when (Moses) was set out...*

The same word is used in the original. the KJV got it right: *so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him...*

No wonder the writer to the Hebrews chose not to include the placing of Moses in the River Nile as an example of Old Testament faith, which we should strive to imitate.

Moses' parents were at first unwilling to put their child to death. They hid him at home in defiance of Pharaoh's decree. That was an act of true faith.

But, when this seemed impossible, they weakened to the point where they were willing to put their child in the Nile, in partial obedience to Pharaoh's order. They weren't willing to put their child to death, so they put him in that woven basket.

In their hearts, I believe that there was some hope that something might happen to save their child's life, but mostly there was the fear that he would die.

Now, what was it that made them want to save baby Moses?

Go back to Exodus 2. Verse 2 says he was a beautiful child. "*... he was a fine child*" (NIV), "*... he was beautiful*" (NASB), "*... he was exceptionally well-formed*" (Berkeley), "*... he was a goodly child*" (King James).

If you're not careful you could read Exodus 2 and think because baby Moses was so cute his mom hid him. If he was ugly she might have just chucked him in the Nile. But he was beautiful, well formed, a fine child so she spared him.

In Heb 11:23 the NIV says: *they saw he was no ordinary child*. Some people say they could tell Moses was going to be specially used by God so they tried to hide him. Again, does that mean if they would have determined he was just a run of the mill kid they would have disposed of him?

You what I believe the real deal was? They looked at their child and said what every parent should say, "He is absolutely precious because he is a gift from God. He has value because all human beings have value."

A society that determines who should live and who should die is a sick society. Abortion is a distortion of everything the Bible teaches about the sanctity of human life.

Every child has value because every human being has been made in the image of God. Cows aren't made in the image of God so we use them for food. Human beings are, so we treat all human life with dignity and respect.

Of course Moses was created by God for a special purpose. We are all created by God for a special purpose.

We all have value and significance that comes from the hand of our Creator. Remember Acts 7:20? *At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God...*

You know, every one of us in this room has a "Moses testimony." If you are here today it is not by any good that you have done. I know that you might think that you're so special and that you deserve something out of life but the true of the matter we all deserve death. The Bible says we're all sinners, and the wages of sin is death.

Think about it. God's judgment on sin has fulfilled his need for justice. Justice has been done. Sin has been punished. Now God is showing us mercy and grace.

If God was willing to create you in His image and include you in the cross, he has a purpose for your life. Just as God knew Moses, God knows you!

Jeremiah 1:5 God says, *Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart for my holy purpose.*

God always knew that there was going to be a YOU! He was instrumental in your existence. Everything that God does, He does for a purpose and on purpose. You're not a mistake. You're not a mishap. You were created for more than you even realize.

I know that your life may be hard, and you may have not seen many days that you can call joyous. But listen to these words given by a guy named Mordecai, after Esther tried to make excuses as to why God couldn't use her, *"Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"*

We don't know what God's going to do with our life! But one thing we do know, that when God thinks about us he has, *"thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."*

God's got a purpose for your life. * Despite your age, * Despite your financial, situation * Despite your job situation, * Despite your social status * Despite what your mother said * Despite what the doctor said, you have a special purpose.

I. We Are All Created By God For A Special Purpose

II. God Provides For Us In Ways We May Not Recognize At First

Read vs 5-6

Miriam, who is Moses' big sister is given the job of watching to see what happens to the baby in the basket.

All of a sudden there's voices coming down a path. Of all the people who could possible end up down at the river it turns out to be Pharaoh's daughter.

Miriam must have thought, "Oh no!" But God had a plan.

I believe that Moses' sister gasped when she saw Pharaoh's daughter spot the basket in the reeds and commanded her servant to bring the basket to her. Of all the people in Egypt, who would you least want to find that baby than a member of the Pharaoh's household?

The young woman saw the ark among the reeds. It's not by chance that that word "ark" is used. In the days of Noah God used an "ark" to save Noah and his family. In this case, God uses a scaled down version of the ark to save the one who would eventually lead His people out of Egypt.

The daughter of Pharaoh sends her servant girl out to get the ark and when she opens it she must have been totally shocked. A baby! And the baby starts to cry.

Pharaoh's own daughter is touched with compassion on this obviously Hebrew child.

Now remember the order which the Pharaoh, this woman's father, had given to all of those in his kingdom which would include his daughter: *"Every boy who is born you shall cast into the river..."*

The Pharaoh could sit on his throne and pass down edicts which caused immeasurable sorrow, suffering, and death without ever being personally touched by the consequences of his decisions.

Now, Pharaoh's daughter came face to face with the implications of her father's policy of genocide. For Pharaoh these were just a bunch of foreign slaves. For Pharaoh's daughter this was a precious baby. Looking into that basket, she saw a Hebrew baby and this baby tugged at the compassion and maternal instincts of this woman.

What her father, the Pharaoh, had commanded was not only unthinkable; it was undoable. There was no way she could toss this child to its death.

She was probably wondering what she's going to do with this baby when Moses' sister arrives with the solution. **Read vs 7-9**

We have no idea what Amram and Jochebed named their baby, but Pharaoh's daughter named him a name that means, "drawn out," Moses.

God Provides For Us In Ways We May Not Recognize At First

Pharaoh's daughter became an extraordinary woman for the simple reason, she became a part of the plan of God. There were a million Jewish people praying every day that God would deliver them from slavery.

With that many prayers going up, anything was possible. She didn't care what her father was going to think. She was going to do what she thought was right. I wonder if her stand led to the abolishment of the law of throwing Hebrew babies in the river.

One commentary writer put it this way: *...described in these verses is not just "the deliverance of the deliverer," but the deliverance of the Hebrew boy babies from drowning in the Nile. Not only did God deliver Moses, but through his deliverance it appears that the Pharaoh's policy of genocide was set aside. Pharaoh had decreed that every boy baby born to an Israelite was to be cast into the Nile, but Pharaoh's own daughter defied this order, thereby making it virtually impossible for the Pharaoh to enforce his own decree.*

Think about it for a moment. Pharaoh's daughter refused to abide by her father's orders by taking Moses out of the water, and then she takes a Hebrew child home with her as her son. Now, in the palace of the Pharaoh whose orders were, "Throw them in the water!", there is a Hebrew boy whose name means "Taken from the water." There is, in my mind, no way that Pharaoh could have enforced his decree when his own daughter disobeyed it when living testimony of this disobedience (namely Moses) lived in the palace of Pharaoh, under his protection. Once again, Pharaoh's efforts to destroy the people of God are turned inside-out, resulting in the fulfillment of God's promises concerning the blessing of His people, Israel.

I. We Are All Created By God For A Special Purpose

II. God Provides For Us In Ways We May Not Recognize At First

III. God Will Use All Of Us If We Just Make Ourselves Available

We wonder, what purpose does my life serve? What real difference does my being here on the planet really make?

We're each just one of billions of people roaming planet earth. Most, if not all of us lead pretty non-descript lives. We're not going to make the evening news. Reporters aren't setting up their satellite equipment in our front yard to broadcast our distinguished accomplishments to a watching world.

We feel like we're just too ordinary to make a difference. But God says we're all here with a purpose.

Psalm 95 says: *...the LORD is the great God, And the great King above all gods. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand.*

Our created purpose is to reflect back to God and others God's glory. We're made to worship. And as we worship God He is honored and pleased.

In Joshua 22:5 Joshua, the man who leads after Moses says, *"But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."*

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are (God's) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

This isn't about changing the whole world. It's about being faithful to your Creator in the context of your little world.

Think about Pharaoh's daughter's little slave girl. **Look at vs 5 again.**

The word translated "maid" is *'amah* in Hebrew. It means female slave. Since the Egyptians had enslaved the Hebrews for several hundred years at this point I'd say it was almost certain that this "maid." was a Hebrew.

Stop and think about this for a moment. Here's a totally anonymous, nondescript young lady. We will never know her name this side of eternity. She's a slave girl. She's someone else's property. Her position was a totally humiliating one. She had no idea when she woke up that morning God had chosen her to rescue the deliverer of her people from the river.

She might have prayed that very morning, "Oh God, why don't you do something to end our slavery. Why don't you act to end the oppression? God do you hear me."

That night, she might have prayed again, "Well God, you still didn't answer my prayer. Another day of slavery. Another day of oppression. God when are you going to do something?"

We don't always know how God is working it out, do we? If she had only known the person inside of that basket she rescued was the greatest prophet of God and the one who would deliver her children and grandchildren from slavery, she would have shouted "hallelujah."

She just went to bed that night thinking, "The baby in the basket was certainly unique. I can't believe Pharaoh's daughter spared him. But when is God going to hear our cries of despair?"

You don't need to be in some great position of power to be used in the plan of God. You won't always know when your little act, is moving the kingdom of God forward by leaps and bounds. So be faithful in what you do, especially the little things.

I'm sure Miriam must have been scared to death to walk up to Pharaoh's daughter. Of all people to find the basket! But Miriam didn't let her fears stop her from doing what she knew she had to do.

A frightened little girl spoke up and God used her for His kingdom.

Did Miriam know that her baby brother would one day be used by God to lead the Hebrew nation out of the misery and bondage of slavery in Egypt? She didn't have the slightest idea.

God will use all of us if we just make ourselves available. We don't have to know anything else except this:

I. We Are All Created By God For A Special Purpose

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III. God Will Use All Of Us If We Just Make Ourselves Available

God has made Himself available to us. We've all disobeyed Him and He could leave us to our own demise. He could justly send us to hell for our sins. Instead our Creator suffered the judgment of hell in our place.

Moses would deliver the Hebrews. Through them would come the Bible. Every Bible writer but Luke was Jewish. Through them would come our Savior.

Jesus Christ was a descendant of Abraham. Born of a godly Jewish mother. Coming in the fulfillment of multitudes of prophecies from the Jewish Scriptures.

That was God's plan for our salvation.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.