

Proverbs 3: 13-24

Exodus 2: 1-1

This Sunday is a special Sunday. If you didn't know, today we are celebrating the gifts of women in the church. I always think it's a great day when we get to celebrate the ministries of different groups throughout the year. Not only are we celebrating women, but we are celebrating 175 years of Presbyterian women. Doesn't that make you excited? 175 years of service, mission and grace.

One of my fondest memories growing up was going to the women's conference with my mother and younger sister. We spent almost every week worshiping in church together but it was something different about when she asked if I wanted to go to the women's conference. It was a moment in time that we were getting to share together and it was made for us. I was a teenager and there weren't many things that I considered cool back then. However, my mother showed me that it was cool to be excited about church and a worthwhile experience to spend time with other women. Which reminds me of the countless ways that women care for each other and others.

Today, once again, we are stepping into the book of Exodus. A book that re-establishes the covenant relationship between God and the Israelites. A book that also leaves a lot of room for interpreting the relationship and roles of women in that time. We have been focused on our theme of getting there and a part of understanding getting there is recognizing those who have played a crucial part in the journey. So we walk up to the door that says exodus and when we step in we find Pharaoh so afraid of his own imagination that he decided to have children killed. However, the further we step in the more we see how there were others getting in the way of his plan. Pharaoh thought that the women could have been so easily manipulated that they would do the dirty work for him but that didn't happen. So here we are...

Before we get into our text this morning there are a few things I want you to hold onto. First, our own imagination has the power to lead us to good or bad. Second, Moses' early years are summed up in ten verses centered around one event that writes him into history. Third, in ten verses the word "him" occurs nine times only referring to Moses, but the word "she" occurs thirteen times and it refers to several women. The birth of Moses is woven together by the movement of women but who is she?

Who is she?

A Levite woman, the mother of Moses. As a mother she saw something greater in her child and did not want his life to be lost. The text says “When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months.” But the phrase “he was fine” in the Hebrew translation is “he was beautiful”, which is similar to the usage in Genesis when speaking of creation “God saw that it was good.” So there was more to this moment than the text leads us to believe. I think something inside of her said that this child is special. She is like Mary the mother of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. Each finding themselves in the middle of something greater, making difficult decisions but believing that what God is asking of them is necessary. She is a visionary.

Who is she?

Moses’ sister. She was a guardian, watching over her brother so that no harm would come to him. We don’t get to see her in action but I suspect that if anyone were to try to harm her brother then she would spring into action. Then when her brother was found she convinced Pharaoh’s daughter to let her take him back to his mother so they could stay together. She is like Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram and sister of Ahaziah in Second Kings. Known for bravely saving her infant nephew, the prince Joash, from being massacred by the Queen Mother. Prince Joash’s survival preserved the line of David, thanks to Jehosheba. She is a protector.

Who is she?

Pharaoh’s daughter. Just days ago she heard her father telling the Egyptians to kill all Hebrew infant sons. Like any household I think this would have been a topic over dinner and she would constantly hear about his dangerous imagination of what is to come from the Israelites. Yet sitting along the bank with her servants she hears a cry and discovers a child. In that moment she could have hesitated and called on someone to kill the child. Instead “she felt sorry for him” because the world he was born into was beyond his control. Not only does she keep the child safe and care for him, she does the unthinkable and adopts him into her family. She is bold.

Who is she?

She is a caregiver: a maid, an attendant, a female slave. They are trusted and provide care. Was Pharaoh’s daughter not worried that they would say something? I think she trusted them more than we could understand. In the mind of some they are anonymous but to me they are the glue holding the story together. Anonymous women are not really anonymous, they are noticed and have a purpose, while emerging on the biblical stage as forceful personalities. In this instance they are watching, participating and a part of the pathway to the future. Sometimes they stir up something we had not experienced yet. Like the woman who reminds Naomi of the worth of Ruth, or the women who believed that if she could only touch the hem of Jesus’ garment she could be healed. She is trustworthy.

But who are they?

Women. When we think about the context of the written Bible we know that this book was written by and for men. At first glance we can see the pages and decide that this isn’t for us. However, the women that emerge

and come alive in this narrative did so with the understanding that they belong as much as anyone else. They are women.

Have you heard of her?

Wisdom. “Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.” She is wisdom. In the book of Proverbs, we are introduced to wisdom, and not only is wisdom personified as a woman, but she was there in the beginning. Proverbs 8:22 says “I, wisdom, was with the Lord when he began his work, long before he made anything else.” She. Was. There. Growing up I would hear this phrase a lot, “if you want something said ask a man but if you want something done ask a woman and if you want something to eat ask a grandmother because they will always feed you.” Well that last part isn’t true, but I wanted to be sure you were still paying attention. Here’s what I find fascinating about wisdom in this book besides the fact that she was there from the beginning, now don’t miss this. She, wisdom, precedes the action. She was there from the beginning, before anything was made. The second verse of the book after the introduction of Solomon says the book is “for gaining wisdom and instruction”, so first comes wisdom then action. All throughout the book of proverbs wisdom is necessary. She, wisdom, raises her voice. (1:20). She, wisdom, will save you (2:12). By her, wisdom, the Lord laid the earth’s foundation (3:19). She, wisdom, will protect you (4:6). She, wisdom, was there (8:27).

In the early life of Moses. She knew the child was special before deciding to hide him. She knew someone needed to watch over him before bringing him back to his mother. She knew the child would not survive and felt sorry for him. Named but overlooked. Unnamed but vital. Named but silenced. Unnamed but essential. Doing the work that creates and sustains a leader but no one sees. There is always a “she” in the story.

Who is the “she” in your story?

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