

Christ Church UCC, Annville PA
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Five Bold Women: Midwives Lives Matters

As we look at the texts today, the common theme is The Rock. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell should not prevail against it." And then also we see the witnesses of the reliable women, who continued to stand on the behalf of God's people. Our testimony should be just as these witnesses, and we should not be blown away by the voices of the naysayers. We are the church and, sisters and brothers, the gates of hell shall not prevail. And the church says Amen and Amen.

I know that we are fighting in a time of a lot of anxiety but, sisters and brothers, I want you to rest assured that God is with us.

From professor of Christian Education at Wheaton College, James C. Wilhoit, I like this quote: "Rock provides protection and security, but it can also be a nuisance when it becomes a stumbling block or an obstacle to progress."

Our journey through the books of the Bible is exciting. Your pastor has not lost his mind, but my wrestling has allowed me to understand God as a Still Speaking God, speaking to us as His people. I know many people fail to wrestle with their theology because it may destroy their perception of who God is to them. I know we sing the hymn: "Tell me the old, old story of unseen things above, of Jesus and the glory, of Jesus and his love. Tell me the story, simply as a child, for I am weak and weary, and helpless and defiled. Tell me the old, old story."

So we do need to hear the old, old story, but it should motivate us and push us to understand who God is not only to us, but also who God is to his people.

Yes, for most of us having management of God is far better than living in the awesomeness and uncertainties of God because it may require our understanding to remain on the shelf as you sing in the privilege of that song by Doris Day. You know the song: "Que sera sera, whatever will be will be. And then we live in that, whatever will be, will be. I think we are being pushed today. I think the church is being pushed even more so.

However, many cannot live in this way and will take action to move from uncomfortable to ensure that hope is for every person. We have a responsibility to ourselves, family, community, and the church. Perhaps that is why we say one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." We will talk about that later.

Yes, God gives us human beings responsibility. We've got to go beyond the prosperity gospel, but we need to understand that God requires action from us. God requires us as human beings to take our rightful stand.

As human spirits, our natural tendency is to understand that we have the right to do things that we want to do. And yes, we do have our rights. Our attitude is we do things that appears to us like a reasonable way to do something. But let's be honest, sometimes doing things that seem right is not always the right thing to do.

Let me give you an example. If you grew up driving on the left side of the road, then it will feel wrong to drive on the right side of the road. I was stationed in Okinawa, Tori Station, in Japan for four years. We had to drive on the left side of the road; however, it felt wrong. However, after a while, driving on the left became natural. Nevertheless, after returning to Fort Hood, Texas, I accidentally drove on the left side of the road, when I noticed headlights coming in my direction. Then I realize I was no longer in Japan and knew driving on the left hand didn't feel right. So what I understood is, where I was, I needed to adjust myself accordingly.

Over the years, I am learning. Your way is not necessarily better, but it will feel better to you, and that is OK. What you do with that feeling is what matters. In Romans 12 we are challenged not to think about ourselves more highly than we ought to. Noticed that it does not say we are not to think about ourselves; instead, it means we are to think of ourselves reasonably. We are to believe that ourselves in the light of God, and God's goodness and his work in our lives. We are not to pretend we don't have anything to offer. Because we are ambassadors for God. We are not to act as if we are the saviors of the world. But we are committed to resolve some of the issues of the world. We are to see ourselves rightly and understand that we are working together with God for the betterment of humanity.

Now let's go to the book of Exodus, chapter 1: verses 8 - 21. If we as a society have learned anything in this world, in all that we are experiencing, it should be that we are our sisters and brothers, and we need each other. We need each other more than we ever did before. If we didn't get anything of all we've experienced through this time of challenge, we need to understand that we are our sisters and brothers, and that we ought to be our sisters' and brothers' keepers. These last five months didn't affect a particular group, ethnicity, culture, religion, a political party. Everyone experienced the pandemic, the racial discrimination, the unjust system that caused a global ripple effect. This happened to us, all over the globe.

We should memorize these occurrences and mark them for our children and our children's children. We should mark these in the lives and our history and remind our children that we were faced with all kinds of devastation, but because we are children of God we are still going on through our faith. We should tell them that life cannot be taken for granted, and we are given a gift from God to share. And because we are a gift from God, we are to give ourselves to each other, as God has given us this gift, and we give this gift one towards another.

Let's look at the text. We are in the book of Exodus, a book that's called a departure or emigration, usually of a large number of people: The Exodus, the departure or separation of the Israelites from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Although forces of evil and powerful rulers tried to challenge this, watch what God does. God will use people and he will not take things for granted. God will use those who are willing, to be used by Him. God set in motion to deliver His people. God set the stage that His people will be delivered from all this oppression of life. And this is no gift.

We need to understand that every person that lives in this society has an important role in the stages of our lives. There is no gift, there is no profession that can't be used for His glory and benefit His people. In the Scriptures, we see some unlikely heroes. Five women took action and changed the course of history. Pharaoh set out to destroy people. Let's be blunt. He wanted a genocide of the Hebrews. He tried to kill all the males, two times, and let the females live. OMG! Can you imagine all the turmoil this would have caused? He tried to kill the boys at birth, and then the midwives realized that they feared God more than they feared men. Can you imagine that we live in a society that we fear God more than we fear the words of angry people. Listen, millions of children are at risk around the world. Children are facing starvation, civil war, abuse, sweatshops, sex trafficking, and many parents fear for the lives of African American teenagers. We as a church need to stand on the rock of the Gospel and understand who we are in the body of Christ.

Oh my, imagine what happens when we fear God and understand that God will give us favor. That no matter what form it comes against us it will not prosper; we understand that we stand on behalf of God. We are His collaborators.

Then Pharaoh wanted to throw them in the Nile. He moved from mass incarceration to murder. However, the women stood up for justice. They realized that this act was not fair, and they stood up on behalf of a whole race of people. We read the Bible as a patriarchal book because we fail to see how effectively women's roles were in the Bible. We fail to see that women play vital roles in the lives of our community. We must go beyond our individual kindness and get involved to create beloved communities and compassionate institutions. We need to get involved and understand the role that we play is so important in the life of our society.

Now watch God at work: he will reverse the ugliest notions of the pharaoh and use the same family to deliver His people. God rescued Moses and placed him Pharaoh's home. God is saying to Pharaoh this is chess, not checkers. Now it's your move. What are you going to do about this, Pharaoh? The very one you tried to destroy, I'm going to set him up and put him in your house, and you will look at him every day and he will remind you that I am right there in the midst of all this angry bitterness.

This is why I say midwives lives matter too. I understand that they were heroic. In this passage, some God-fearing midwives carry out their profession and faith and faithfulness. As lowly service-oriented people, they stood up to the powerful. They understood that it was God that they fear. And God blessed them, and he used them to bless and prosper an entire nation. They did not say, we are lowly midwives. They did not say we don't have any importance in our society. They did not feel sorry for themselves. They realized who they were, and they did their calling according to their faith and faithfulness. Can you imagine that these people realize who they were in God that they would carry out their faith and their traditions and beliefs because they realized that our society needs each and every person. Five women acting. Shiphrah, Puah, the Levite woman, the Pharaoh's daughter and yes, the Pharaoh's sister. They took a negative thing and made it positive. Because they realized that justice must be served for all.

It is time for the church to answer this question: How might we leverage our gifts, our professions, our calling for the glory of God and the good of his people? All I am saying is the gift God gave you is important for the betterment of our society and not our selfish gains. When we live out our gift, we help heal the world.

Midwives Lives Matters. Five Bold Women were heroic and humanity, we're blessed because of it. Sisters and brothers, take your rightful place, and realize that God needs each and every one of you to be bold witnesses for who God is. And as I said in my beginning, we are the church and the gates of hell should not prevail against it.

Amen and Amen.