

Reflections for 14th March 2021

Mothering Sunday

Midwives, Mothers and Sisters

We don't know the names of many of the women who appear in the Old Testament, so, when we are told a woman's name, that is probably a sign that they are particularly important in some way. In the first two chapters of the book of Exodus, at a time of terrible oppression of the Hebrew people, within the story of the birth of Moses, there are four women whose names we are told.

We learn the names of two midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, who were ordered by the king of Egypt to do a terrible thing – to see that Hebrew baby boys did not survive and grow up. By various means they defied the king's orders, because they knew that those orders were wrong, and they put themselves at great risk, to protect and give life to others. So the memory of them and what they had done was treasured, and so their names were remembered and passed on as part of the story of Moses.

Then we are told how Moses only survived and grew up because of the actions of his mother and sister, who are later named as Jochebed and Miriam. By then the king had ordered that all Hebrew boys should be thrown into the river Nile, but Moses' mother was determined that her son should survive, so she made a basket to float him on the river. Moses' mother, and then his sister, did everything they could, and were prepared to put themselves at risk, to try and give him a chance to live. And it worked, as Moses found a place in Pharaoh's own household, and, because of the quick thinking of his sister, his own mother was able to nurse him as a child.

So, on Mothers' Day, we are reminded about some people of faith who did remarkable things –mothers and midwives, women and girls – who did all they could to protect and nurture children, who were prepared to take risks, to defy authority, and stand up against the oppression of their people; and who (in ways that they can never have known) were a vital part of God's plan, which was for Moses to survive, and eventually become the person who would lead God's people into freedom.

Revd John Waller

God our redeemer, who called your servants,
mothers and midwives, women and girls, along with many others,
to prepare the way to freedom for your people:
free us from the tyranny of evil,
and bring us to the freedom of our promised land with you.
Amen.

Bible readings: Exodus 2. 1-10; Colossians 3. 12-17: Luke 2. 33-35

Story: 'The Secret Baby' (a version of the birth of Moses from Exodus chapter 1-2)