

# Giving Then Back to God

Exodus 2: 1 – 10

February 5, 2012

## I. Introduction

- A. “Moses in the Bulrushes” or “Baby in a Basket” or whatever title you think of
  - 1. This text is one of the more familiar stories in the Bible
- A. It has often been used to illustrate a mother’s love for her baby
  - 1. Or God’s miraculous power in saving the life of this child
    - a. Who would turn out to be such an important figure in OT history
- A. But have you ever considered what it would have been like for Moses’ mother
  - 1. After the life of her baby has been spared, and she has cared for him
    - a. Loved him and provided for him as only a mother can
- A. How would she have felt on the day when she took Moses by the hand
  - 1. Led him to the Egyptian palace
    - a. And gave him back to the Pharaoh’s daughter to be her son
- A. I don’t know how the Israelite woman would have felt toward this daughter of the king
  - 1. But I can imagine that she didn’t have any warm feelings toward the Pharaoh
    - a. The ruler who was responsible for enslaving and mistreating her people
      - (1) And from whom she hid her baby so that he wouldn’t be killed
- A. Don’t you suppose it must have been terribly difficult
  - 1. To see her child taken to live in the luxury of the king’s palace
    - a. While she and the rest of her people suffered under the oppression
      - (1) Of the Egyptian taskmasters who made their lives so miserable
- A. Or perhaps, with the love of a mother for her son, she was glad
  - 1. That he would escape from the drudgery of life as a slave
    - a. And be able to enjoy the benefits of being a part of the royal family
  - 2. I think it would still would have been hard for her to let him go
- A. Giving up something or someone we love is never easy
  - 1. Whether we do it of our own accord or if we are forced to do so
- A. Perhaps that is why, in our parent/child dedication services
  - 1. Soon after the question about accepting the baby as a gift from God
    - a. Comes the question – And are you willing to surrender this child
      - (1) To the life and the ministry that God has in mind for him or her

- A. Surely it is easier to think of giving a child back to God, or to God's plan for their life
  - 1. Than to entrust your child to the care of someone you might not even like
- A. But this morning, I would like for us to think about for a few moments
  - 1. What we are really saying when we surrender our children to God's will
- A. And then we will also consider what that says about our willingness to surrender
  - 1. Ourselves, and all of the things we may hold on to most dearly
    - a. And entrust everything that we have, including our own lives, to God

## II. Let's look first at our text from Exodus Chapter 2

- A. The setting is Egypt, where we find the descendants of Jacob, later known as Israel
  - 1. Turned from welcome guests during the lifetime of Joseph
    - a. To slaves under the reign of a new Pharaoh
- A. The characters involved in this story are from two families –
  - 1. One, a family of Israelite slaves, the other from the family of the Pharaoh
- A. The conflict in this story is initiated by an order sent out by the king
  - 1. That all the baby boys born to the Israelites are to be done away with
    - a. So that this immigrant people will not become a threat to the Egyptians
- A. The plot thickens when the baby Moses is born
  - 1. And his mother defies the Pharaoh's order and keeps her baby hidden for 3 months
- A. If you have a good imagination, you may already be starting to feel
  - 1. The tension in that home, where at least two other children are a part of the family
    - a. The efforts to keep this newborn baby from crying, betraying his presence
  - 2. Worry about what will happen if the wrong person hears about this child
    - a. And finally, the realization that something different will have to be done
- A. That something is a little boat, a reed basket coated with tar to make it waterproof
  - 1. Probably lined with something soft to protect its precious cargo
- A. The baby is placed inside, and the basket is hidden among the reeds
  - 1. That grow in abundance along the banks of the Nile river
    - a. With an older sister left as a lookout to see what will happen
- A. We don't know how long she had to wait, the story doesn't tell us that
  - 1. It also doesn't tell us if it was totally unexpected, or perhaps a part of the plan
    - a. When the Pharaoh's daughter appeared at that same place along the river's edge
  - 2. Bathing in the river was not unusual, so it makes me sort of wonder –
    - a. Was this a place the princess would have come before to bathe

- A. But now, the most unlikely part of the story unfolds
  - 1. The Pharaoh's daughter sees the basket, and when it is opened
    - a. She falls in love with the bawling little 3-month old baby inside
  - 2. Can you imagine – a woman falling in love with a tiny little baby?
- A. And then the story takes a surprising twist – the baby's older sister
  - 1. Actually walks up to the Pharaoh's daughter, and offers to find someone
    - a. Who can care for this infant until he is old enough to live with the princess
  - 2. Was she prepared ahead of time to do that, or did she act on her own
    - a. We don't really know
- A. We also don't know if the princess has any suspicion that it might be the baby's mother
  - 1. Who is brought to her as a potential caretaker for the baby
    - a. This daughter of the Pharaoh seems to be used to getting whatever she wants
      - (1) And right now, she wants this baby to be her son
- A. And she is ready and willing to pay for the service of an Israelite slave
  - 1. Seemingly without giving any thought to the fact that she is actually buying her son
- A. And now, whatever she was expecting before, Moses' mother surely recognizes
  - 1. That she has made a deal in which she will someday have to give up her child
    - a. In exchange for saving his life
- A. Do you suppose that made any difference in the way these parents treated this baby
  - 1. During those months or years when he was in their home
- A. Don't you imagine they must have made a special effort
  - 1. To tell this child the stories of their people, and of the God of their ancestors
    - a. Instilling their values and beliefs into his young mind
- A. And then the day arrives, when Moses is taken to live in the palace
  - 1. Don't you suppose, that mixed in with all the others feelings and emotions
    - a. There was at least a bit of hope that he would remember all he has learned
- A. We only have to read the next verses in this chapter to find that he does remember
  - 1. Little Moses, now grown up to be a man, still identifies himself as an Israelite
    - a. And he responds to the suffering of his people as one of them
      - (1) Not as a member of the royal Egyptian family
- A. Later on, when a voice speaks to him from a bush that is on fire but not burning up
  - 1. Moses still remembers the God his parents told him about
    - a. And he responds with awe and worship...and reluctant obedience

- A. Years later, when the Israelite people heard this story told and retold
  - 1. They could see the obvious hand of God in these events
- A. Protecting this baby, bringing together the circumstances of his life in such a way
  - 1. That made him uniquely fitted for the task God had in mind for him
- A. But I wonder, when the story of the baby Moses was told
  - 1. Did the people stop to think about the dedication and commitment of his parents
    - a. And their willingness to give up their son in order to make it all possible
- III. Many of us here today, looking back, can also see the hand of God working in our lives
  - A. Perhaps we can identify with this story of faithful parents
    - 1. Who made sure we were taught the stories of God as we were growing up
  - A. Stories that have become the basis of our own faith and practice today
    - 1. And for those of us who are parents, these are the stories
      - a. That we hope to pass on to our children and to their children as well
  - A. Some of us may not be able to relate to the story of Moses in that way
    - 1. But one thing all of us have, or will have in common
      - a. Is that our parents experienced a time when they had to give us up
        - (1) Allow us to start making choices on our own
  - A. That can be as difficult for parents today as it must have been for Moses' parents
    - 1. Giving up their child to the Pharaoh's daughter
      - a. Seeing him immersed in the culture of Egyptian royalty
    - 2. Not knowing if he would hold on to any of the values and beliefs
      - a. That they had sought to instill in him as a child
        - (1) But they had to let him go
  - A. And whether or not our parents consciously dedicated us to the will or plan of God
    - 1. As we have grown up and begun making choices for ourselves
      - a. We have had to decide if we are willing to give up our lives to God
  - A. Moses, if we continued on in the story, had to give up some things as well
    - 1. When faced with the decision between the lifestyle of the rich and powerful
      - a. And standing up for fairness in the treatment of his own people
    - 2. Moses didn't just choose between his family allegiances
      - a. He literally chose to give up the life he had become accustomed to
    - 3. The wealth and power and fame that could have been his
      - a. He gave it all up in order to take a stand against injustice

- A. I believe he was influenced in making that decision
  - 1. By a sense of justice that must have been instilled in him from birth
    - a. And we make choices like that in our lives today, too
- A. Perhaps we have not lived in slavery like Moses' people did
  - 1. Although there are many forms of slavery and injustice in our world today
- A. And perhaps our choices will not be between life in a literal palace
  - 1. Or standing with the poor and oppressed people of our world
    - a. Although sometimes it may come close to that
- A. And I believe the more tightly we hold on to the things of this world
  - 1. The harder it will be to surrender ourselves to God's plan and purpose for our life
- IV. This morning I would encourage us all to consider our level of commitment to God
  - A. What have we been given that we may need to give back to God
    - 1. Our children, our family, our spouse, our home, our possessions
      - a. Would we be willing to give them up – I pray that we won't need to
  - A. And sometimes the things we cling to the most are not really things at all
    - 1. Pride, control, envy, lust – if we are committed to God's plan for our lives
      - a. There can be no room for anything that crowds God out
  - A. If we are serious about being a follower of Jesus
    - 1. Then we must be ready to give up everything that would hold us back
  - A. Moses' mother had to give up her son
    - 1. Moses had to give up privileges and an easy lifestyle
      - a. Jesus willingly gave up his life
  - A. What am I willing to give up today
    - 1. What about you