



Pioneer Pastoral Charge
Sunday August 23rd, 2020
Compassion and Courage
Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

Candle Lighting: *The light of Christ... God around us,
among us, within us.*

In the quiet times of life,
we rest our hearts with God.
In times of great challenge,
when the world feels against us
God is the One who shows us
how to have compassion for the weary
how to have courage to be strong
even against the un-seeable dangers in life.
In this quiet time together,
let us listen for God,
let us open our hearts to possibilities
in times of challenge and change.

Hymn: 🎵 **VU#374 Come and find the quiet centre**

Scripture is our song for the journey,
the living word passed on
from generation to generation to guide and inspire.
**God calls us to be
doers of the word
and not hearers only.**

Exodus 1:8-18 Common English Version

8 Many years later a new king came to power. He did not know what Joseph had done for Egypt, and he told the Egyptians:

There are too many of those Israelites in our country, and they are becoming more powerful than we are. If we don't outsmart them, their families will keep growing larger. And if our country goes to war, they could easily fight on the side of our enemies and escape from Egypt.

11 The Egyptians put slave bosses in charge of the people of Israel and tried to wear them down with hard work. Those bosses forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses, where the king could store his supplies. 12 But even though the Israelites were mistreated, their families grew larger, and they took over more land. Because of this, the Egyptians hated them worse than before and made them work so hard that their lives were miserable. The Egyptians were cruel to the people of Israel and forced them to make bricks and to mix mortar and to work in the fields.

15 Finally, the king called in Shiphrah and Puah, the two women who helped the Hebrew mothers when they gave birth. He told them, "If a Hebrew woman gives birth to a girl, let the child live. If the baby is a boy, kill him!"

17 But the two women were faithful to God and did not kill the boys, even though the king had told them to. The king called them in again and asked, “Why are you letting those baby boys live?”

19 They answered, “Hebrew women have their babies much quicker than Egyptian women. By the time we arrive, their babies are already born.” God was good to the two women because they truly respected him, and he blessed them with children of their own.

The Hebrews kept increasing until finally, the king gave a command to everyone in the nation, “As soon as a Hebrew boy is born, throw him into the Nile River! But you can let the girls live.”

Scripture opened, God invited: Prayer for Grace

Holy God,

In this story from our faith history,
we are confronted with a story of
power misused and people abused,
terror forming a backbone of courage
in those who could have given up.

We see in this story

In the midwives, Shiphrah and Puah,
people who found courage

To stand up to those who took privilege for granted

To make the choice to save life –

even at the peril of their own

To stand up to Bullies and do the right thing

To support and care for their community.

As we hear these words today,
we see that there are times
when we have lost our way.

There are times
when we have
forgotten the stories and lessons of our past;
when we misuse our power and don't recognize it;
when we forget that, together, we can be better.

Forgive us, God.

Remind us to live the courage of the midwives,
bringing new life into the world against all odds.
Remind us that you ask us to risk ourselves
so that others may live.
Remind us that, if we will follow you,
we will not fall into the trap of
using power against those who need us the most.

**May we feel
your love and compassion surround us
May our hearts and minds be open
to your voice so that we can be
your people of courage and care in the world.
Teach us, God: we are listening.
Amen.**

Words of assurance.

God is the One.

God is the One who has promised to walk with us.

God is the One who has promised to teach us

God is the One who calls us

to hear the lessons from the past

and move boldly into the future

celebrating and honouring all life and all people,

God knows we can do this

God is with us. We are not alone.

Thanks be to God!

αHymn:  **SOTS 9 Strength for the journey.**

Exodus: 2:1-10

2 A man from the Levi tribe married a woman from the same tribe, 2 and she later had a baby boy. He was a beautiful child, and she kept him inside for three months. 3 But when she could no longer keep him hidden, she made a basket out of reeds and covered it with tar. She put him in the basket and placed it in the tall grass along the edge of the Nile River. 4 The baby's older sister stood off at a distance to see what would happen to him.

5 About that time one of the king's daughters came down to take a bath in the river, while her servant women walked along the river bank. She saw the basket in the tall grass and sent one of the young women to pull it out of the water. 6 When the king's daughter opened the basket, she saw the baby and felt sorry for him because he was crying. She said, "This must be one of the Hebrew babies."

7 At once the baby’s older sister came up and asked, “Do you want me to get a Hebrew woman to take care of the baby for you?”

8 “Yes,” the king’s daughter answered.

So the girl brought the baby’s mother, 9 and the king’s daughter told her, “Take care of this child, and I will pay you.”

The baby’s mother carried him home and took care of him. 10 And when he was old enough, she took him to the king’s daughter, who adopted him. She named him Moses because she said, “I pulled him out of the water.”

***Scripture opened, God invited:
Listen to the spirit***

The Hebrew, Old Testament, Scripture for this week, is a long one. At other times when this has happened, I have perhaps summarized some of the story, or skipped a bit. But this week it seemed as though the whole scripture piece needed to be told.

I read the first portion and, with dismay, recognized that this story written thousands of years ago is being played out again today.

After years of plenty, after years of few challenges in life, those who held the power in Egyptian society became restless. They forgot that the privilege that they enjoyed was achieved through the gifts of

others. They forgot that the power that they had could have been so easily taken away if someone else, Joseph, hadn't saved their skins and their tummies through sharing and planning.

They stopped telling the stories of the plenty and famine and sharing because they perceived that it made them beholden to someone else. So they erased that part from their history stories. They didn't want to recognize that the Israelites/Hebrews could be a valuable part of society a valuable part of their story, so they denigrated them, they reduced them to slaves, keeping them separated and down – “in their place.”

The Israelites hadn't done anything wrong. But power is often seen to be a fragile thing and when those who have it get worried they start defending their power at the expense of others. Eventually, the ones with privilege and power take it for granted and won't see the imbalance that they have created.

This very story is mirrored in our societies in different places today. For example, white people hold a place of privilege that we have become accustomed to. We changed history stories to erase mistakes that were made, we worried about losing our power and began reducing other people to be “in their place.”

In this scripture, we see that the spirit of the Israelites could not be broken. Despite persecution,

they continued to find strength in their faith. They continued to tell their stories to each other, learning from them, living forward with hope. They kept their integrity and when the powers that be started a gender genocide designed to reduce the imagined threat of the Israelites, there were two brave women who set themselves up as guardians so that the rest of their culture could grow.

Shiphrah and Puah, midwives, refused to engage in the work of holding their people down. Their courage allowed the birth of many Israelites, gave courage to others and made way for a story of freedom to unfold.

There are voices in today's world that are giving courage to others to name their story, to claim their right to be equal in the world today, to share-- not to take away-- the privilege that was meant for many not just a few.

With this background scripture unsettling our heads and hearts, perhaps making us uncomfortable as we see ourselves placed in that story of then and now, we hear about an opportunity.

A child was born under threat – because power was worried – but the great love of family meant that the child was cared for and hidden and protected. There may have been other children loved and protected, but this is the story of one. The king's daughter came across the child... and knew that this was a

Hebrew baby. Her courage to introduce the child to her family, to raise the child as her own, to brazenly parade the child before her Father who had ordered the child's death is absolutely amazing.

Adopted and raised in an Egyptian household, the child Moses, claimed his Hebrew heritage and helped become a liberator of an oppressed people.

It wasn't right that the Egyptians devalued a whole people. It wasn't right that they wouldn't admit their mistakes. It wasn't right that they tried to erase history, to sweep their mistakes under the rug of time. It wasn't right then and it's not right now.

We find ourselves in a great time of upheaval. There are many of us who feel that our privileges are being eroded, someone else's story is infringing on ours and we are scared. We like the freedom we have, we are comfortable looking after ourselves, we are really not into changing for someone else.

What this story also tells us is the power of care, compassion, courage and working together. Look at all of the women who banded together in this story... women who typically didn't have rights or privileges at all – especially the slave women, women who didn't even know each other. Look at them take a look at how they could change things, one piece, one person at a time. The Midwives pretended innocence to enable lives to be saved...

without hurting anyone they changed the story to save others.

The Mother of Moses and his sister, Miriam, protected this child but also sacrificed their time with him so that he could be saved.

The king's daughter introduced a whole new storyline as she took this 'foreign child' into her household and that of her Father.

Look at how care and compassion for those who were most vulnerable wove around them and, in time, created the opportunity for freedom and liberation.

As we look at these stories where do we see ourselves reflected in them and in our world today? Are we creating societies where we devalue people because of their race, their colour, their differences with us? Why are we afraid of diversity?

Are we doing our best to look around and see how our actions can protect others, saving lives as we do so... one person at a time? Are we able to find ourselves in the courageous women of this story: willing to do what we can to make many small differences that would inspire the world to be more caring, more compassionate, more courageous?

These are the stories that Jesus would have shared with faithful people, to teach them how to have courage, how to care for each other, to look forward

with hope to the future when possibilities of being instigators of a caring society would abound.

The stories of the Hebrew bible are stories of great challenge, many mistakes, great courage and amazing faith. Those who found themselves in trouble often turned to their faith to help them through it.

Every time they did, God was there. God was there to teach them the power of care and compassion. God was there to teach them the power of truth and partnerships and courage to live what was right.

History should never be erased but sometimes we need to hear the stories from different perspectives to get the whole story. Stories of faith from then and now challenge us to be God's caring and compassionate people.

May we give thanks for the stories, the challenge and the love that God places in our path.

Amen.

Offering Invitation

God knows our struggles to let go of fear and jump into a world of love.

God invites us to be wisdom and love, compassion and care in the world.

How are we responding to God's invitation? When we have something to offer to the world that honours all life, do we share it or hold it close?

Our offerings are our response to God's invitation. Offerings of care, compassion, and, yes, of treasure are how we keep God's work and dream alive.

Amen.

Hymn: ♪ VU#707

For The Faithful Who Have Witnessed

Prayers of God's people for God's people

Holy One,

Today we hear stories of women who pushed against authority to give life to the world.

We hear stories of women who worked together to make decisions that opened up possibilities for freedom.

As we listen to these stories, we give you thank that you continue to offer us inspiration and accompaniment as you teach us to love as fiercely as they did.

Today, we were reminded
about how easy it can be
to lose the lessons of history
and to repeat the errors of the past.

We pray for leaders in the world,
that they will wisely consider what
is necessary to give life to all,
that they will have courage to acknowledge
the mistakes of the past with humility
that they will listen to unexpected voices
refocussing them on compassionate leadership.
rule.

**May we continue to give our best
so that the world will receive life.**

Today, we were reminded
of the courage it takes to
change your own living
for the sake of someone else.

We pray for those who need courage
For those who turn up every day
to care for those who are sick,
knowing that they may be next.
For those who find themselves
isolated and alone,
because the world is currently too dangerous for
their bodies and minds.
For those who
find themselves too close to violence,
with no place to go.

For those who have a story to tell
that no-one wants to hear.

For those whose plans have been
lost in the chaos of life around them.

**May we continue to give our best
so that the world will receive life.**

Today we remember the power of
your love.

We pray for the power of your spirit to be
with those who have no power.

We pray for the power of your spirit to be
with those who are ill.

We pray for the power of your spirit
to be those who are grieving the loss of loved ones.

**May we continue to give our best
so that the world will receive life.**

We pray for ourselves.

**That you will help us
to listen for your voice,**

that we will have the courage

to be your beloved people

who will make choices

that offer love and life to your world.

Amen.

℣Blessing

Let us go into the world
listening to the stories that speak of
courage and faith.
Let us go into the world transformed
by love of God to be
God's welcoming care in the world.
May the grace of Jesus the Christ,
and the love of God,
and the strength of the Holy Spirit
be with all of us, today and always. **Amen.**

Changing the Christ Candle:

The light of Christ, shining into all the corners of the earth,
showing us where we are and where we are meant to be.
The Spirit of God. Breathe it in...and know that God is with us
wherever we go.

Hymn: ♪ Be God's SOTS 9

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Acknowledgements

Inspired by...**Gathering.** Pentecost 1 2020 (Year A)

Dates to remember:

Sept 4th – Bake Sale Table, Oyen Farmer's Market

October - Frozen fundraiser orders

Delivery on November 27

Our offerings:

Even though our church buildings are closed, the work of the church continues in our communities. We are connecting by calling each other, by being part of community supports such as the Oyen Helpline, Meals on Wheels, the Oyen & District Food Bank, the Big Country Thrift Store, providing free re-usable masks for our communities.

We still need your support to pay the bills. Power and heat are needed to keep our buildings healthy. We do recognize that some folk just can't afford to offer funds at this time – offer us prayers instead.

There are many options to choose from to send financial support:

Send a cheque to Box 392, Oyen, T0J 2J0. We'll make sure it gets to the right place.

Sign up for PAR. Pre-Authorized Remittance becomes your memory helper – sending your offering to the church automatically. Forms are available at the Oyen United Church, and by e-mail. Return completed forms to the office

E-transfers are also available for Oyen United Church and Cereal United Church. Please remember to put in the notes what you are sending us funds for.

Oyen United Church: OUCetransfers@gmail.com

Cereal United Church: CUCetransfers@gmail.com