

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
May 11, 2014 – Mother's Day**

**Exodus 2:1-10**

**Hebrews 11:23-28**

**Wanted: Spiritual Mothers in Difficult Times!**

- 1. The example of Moses' mother**
- 2. The efforts of Christian mothers today**

**Hymns: 150 – "Blessed Gift of Motherhood"  
– 153 – 155 - Closing: 610**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

**Exodus 2:1-10 –**

*Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.*

*Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said. Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" "Yes, go," she answered. And the girl went and got the baby's mother.*

*Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."*

**Hebrews 11:23-28 –**

*By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no*

*ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.*

*By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.*

Dear mothers on this Mother's Day, as well as all those here who have an earthly mother!

I ran across an article that contained some thoughts on motherhood. It did so based on a conversation between a mother and her daughter. It went like this:

"We are sitting at lunch one day when my daughter casually mentions that she and her husband are thinking of 'starting a family.' 'We're taking a survey,' she says half-joking. 'Do you think I should have a baby?'

'It will change your life,' I say, carefully keeping my tone neutral.

'I know,' she says, 'no more sleeping in on weekends, no more spontaneous vacations...'

But that's not what I meant at all. I look at my daughter, trying to decide what to tell her. I want her to know what she will never learn in childbirth classes. I want to tell her that the physical wounds of child bearing will heal, but becoming a mother will leave her with an emotional wound that will forever leave her vulnerable.

I consider warning her that she will never again hear a tragic news story without asking, 'What if that had been MY child?' That every plane crash, every house fire will haunt her. That when she sees pictures of starving children, she will wonder if anything could be worse than watching your child die.

I look at her carefully manicured nails and stylish suit and think that no matter how sophisticated she is now, becoming a mother will reduce her to the primitive level of a mother bear. That a panicked cry of 'Mom!' will cause her to drop her soufflé or her best crystal without a moment's hesitation.

I feel that I should warn her that no matter how many years she has invested in her career, she will be professionally derailed by motherhood. She might

arrange for childcare, but one day she will be going into an important business meeting and she will think of her baby's sweet smell.

Decisions will no longer be routine. A five-year old boy's desire at McDonald's to go to the men's room rather than the women's room with me will become a major dilemma. Who might be lurking in that men's room? However decisive she may be at the office, she will second-guess herself constantly as a mother.

Looking at my attractive daughter, I want to assure her that eventually she will shed the pounds of pregnancy, but she will never feel the same about herself. Her life will be of less value to her. She would give hers up in a moment to save her child, but will also begin to hope for more years, not to accomplish her own dreams, but to watch her child accomplish theirs. I want her to know that scars and stretch marks will become badges of honor.

My daughter's relationship with her husband will change, but not in the way she thinks. You can love a man who is careful to powder the baby or who never hesitates to play with his child. She will fall in love with him again for reasons she would now find very unromantic.

How do you describe the exhilaration of seeing your own child learn to ride a bike? Or hearing the belly laugh of a baby who is touching the a dog or cat for the first time?

My daughter's quizzical look makes me realize that tears have formed in my eyes. "You'll never regret it," I say huskily. Then I reach across the table, squeezed my daughter's hand, and offered a silent prayer for her, for me, and for all the mere mortal women who stumble their way into this most wonderful of callings."

For those of you here who have been blessed with the privilege of being mothers, perhaps you can relate to that woman's thoughts. Motherhood is most definitely a unique position instituted by God. It is a paradox of privilege and joy on the one hand, and difficulty and frustration on the other hand. It is a position that admittedly is difficult to describe.

Today on Mother's Day, let's focus on one of Scripture's accounts of a mother and focus on the theme: **"Wanted – Spiritual Mothers in Difficult Times!"**

As we focus on this theme today, we run a few risks:

- First, there may be some people here today who had bad experiences with

their earthly mother. We might open up old wounds simply by addressing this topic. If this is the case for you, this certainly is not the intention of this message today.

- Or, there may be some here today who have long wished to be mothers, but the Lord has not granted them this privilege. Again, the intention is not to open wounds by having a message on motherhood.
- Finally, a message on mothers might give the impression that we're leaving many people out in this message. But we'll see today that the Scriptural guidance for mothers is very applicable for parents, grandparents, friends, and all Christians. Everyone can take to heart what is to be learned today!

## 1. The example of Moses' mother

The account that we will focus on this morning is contained in the first two lessons that we read. It is the account of Moses' mother, who might have been named Jochabed, according to Exodus 6.

Moses' mother lived in extremely difficult times. Exodus 1 tells us that when God's people lived in Egypt after the time when Jacob and Joseph moved them there from the Promised Land, a new pharaoh rose to power. Exodus 1 says, *"Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country." So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor... But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly... The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives... "When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live... So God was kind to the midwives... Because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. Then Pharaoh*

*gave this order to all his people: "Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."*

There was a murderous persecution of the Jewish nation long before the holocaust that we're most familiar with. Due to a perceived threat from a growing nation, the new pharaoh wanted all baby boys murdered.

What did Moses' mother do? Our second lesson from Hebrews 11 said, *"By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict."* We don't know exactly what caused them to see he was "no ordinary child," but by God's hand they did. And they were not afraid. They foreshadowed the New Testament verse from the book of Acts: *"We ought to obey God rather than men."* We obey authorities, but when they command us to sin we cannot submit to what they order us to do. So they hid Moses. But can you imagine the fear? There obviously would have been ways of investigating whether Hebrew babies were males or not, and we can be certain that the punishment would be swift and severe. This must have gone through Moses' mother's mind every day. But they were not afraid!

After three months, the plan had to change. They could not hide him forever. So Jochabed hatched a plan that has become a well-known account among adults and Sunday School students. She floated the baby in a basket in the Nile River. This plan might lead us to ask, "What was she thinking?!" But if we look at the details and the outcome, we can see that there was a method to her madness here. The older daughter is strategically placed to watch. And did she know that Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe near this place? Could she have prayed for the outcome that we know happened? It very well could be. When Pharaoh's daughter saw the little ark floating by the reeds, she sent a slave girl to fetch it. When she opened the little ark, the Hebrew language is dramatic. It adds a "Behold!" It says, "She saw the baby and behold, child crying!" What young lady wouldn't have her heart moved by this sight? She decides that this life must be saved.

The daughter offered to get a nursemaid for the baby, and in a God-directed, miraculous turn of events, Moses' own mother gets to legally raise her son until he is weaned and ready to go to Pharaoh's daughter's home!

Mothers, what would you do if you were Jochabed during those three years? Would you be motivated to make every effort to raise your child spiritually? Would you be motivated to sing those Hebrew songs about the Lord? Would you be eager to teach children's prayers to that little one? Would you look forward every day to teaching a little lesson about sin and the promises of God to save? We can only imagine how this God-fearing woman carried this out!

Then, in a great act of trust in the Lord Jochabed gave Moses back. She gave him back to Pharaoh's daughter to be adopted as her child. This was the only way he could live. What faith! Can you imagine the last spiritual words she spoke to Moses on that day? Can you imagine the prayers that she would pray after he was gone? **She was truly a spiritual woman and mother of faith in difficult times!**

We can marvel today at the results that God brought about from the spiritual beginning of Moses' life and his future maturity. Moses received valuable training for his God-given mission to come. Acts 7 says, *"Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action."* Moses received the best education possible in the ancient world. The sciences. The arts. Protocol in government. Math and organization. This would be invaluable to his future assignment from God to lead his people back to the Promised Land.

We read more remarkable things in Hebrews 11: *"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he*

*kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.”*

Moses could have had:

- Luxury
- Power
- Pleasure
- Treasure at a time of riches greater than King Tut's time
- And perhaps even a couple lines of history carved on some ancient monument about his accomplishments as an Egyptian prince

But what did he choose? He eventually rejected his adoption. He chose disgrace and persecution among his people. And Acts 7 tells us that even before he fled from Pharaoh for his life at age 40, Moses had designs on delivering his people.

There's more:

- Moses would be the political leader and spokesman before Pharaoh later in his life.
- Moses would be the giver of the Passover laws and faithfully have the people keep this Messianic festival.
- Moses would write the first five books of the OT – the Law, the TORAH.
- Moses would be the greatest prophet of the Old Testament, as Scripture says.
- Moses would encourage the nation about Christ: *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him” (Dt. 18:15).*
- Moses would look ahead to the reward of heaven that he knew.
- And Moses would be one of the two who joined Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and talk about Christ's ministry to save the world.

All of which happened because God used a spiritual mother of faith to save Moses' life and begin his spiritual training.

## **2. The efforts of today's Christian mothers**

Since mothers have such great intuition, the mothers here today know where this is going.

What a good example for us to consider and discuss on this Mother's Day as we think about motherhood in our times!

Jochabed lived in difficult times. Thank the Lord we do not have to live under the threats and laws enforced in Egypt in her day! Yet mothers today have been given the same high responsibility of raising a little one that she had. And what a responsibility it is! Mothers, one day your child will stand before God and have to give an answer for what they have done. And in God's court there will only be two outcomes: Eternal life or eternal death. You are one of the first teachers of a little soul, and you will have an influence with them that is completely unique.

Yet we live in difficult times. Today is a difficult day and age in which to be a mother. What would you list as challenges to your work of raising a godly child?

- Your children are living in the End Times, when love has grown cold and godly examples in the world have all but disappeared.
- Your children are living in a time when the truths of Scripture in teachings such as creation, marriage between one man and one woman, and Jesus Christ being the only way to heaven are persecuted.
- Your children are living in a time when Christian morals are not the norm. Your child will see ungodly examples of young people living together without being married, of promiscuity among teenagers, or homosexuality being called acceptable behavior.
- Your children are living in a time when even many Christian churches have denied the authority of Scripture as God's Word.
- Your children are living in a day and age where respect for authority is not prominent.
- Your children are living in a day and age where young women regularly dress like they have something to show off or even sell.
- Your children are living in a day and age where they will have a great deal of money to spend. What will they spend it on? In 2012 a study showed that the 25.6 million

teenagers in our country earned \$91.1 billion. Only 40% claimed that they were saving any of it. What will your children spend their money on? (Source: Marketingvox, Rand Youth Poll, Seventeen, Packaged Facts)

- Your children are living in a day and age where drugs are readily available (and legal?)
- Your children are living in a day and age where cable TV will bring into your home more off-color language, violence, and graphic images than ever before.
- Your children are living in a world that is rapidly changing to where every person will have a window to the Internet and the influence of the cold, cold world hooked to their belt all day.
- Your children are living in a world of social media that invites countless people to see their private information and pictures, and invite a contact from them.

What's a mother to do? Not only this but there will be pressure – perhaps even from Christian mothers and families – who exhibit a perfect appearance of a perfect family by displaying their pictures, activities, and accomplishments online. All seems so well out there, and not in your own family!

But let's face it. There will be pressure from within you too, mothers. There will be pressure from yourself. After all, you still are human and have a sinful nature to fight against:

- Will you fight fatigue? Fatigue with a seemingly unchanging routine that needs to be repeated with little ones at home? Or fatigue in trying to keep up with the bursting schedule of activities of older children?
- Will you fight frustration? Frustration from children who don't seem to learn right from wrong? Frustration from a husband who is not the strong spiritual leader he should be?
- Will you fight fear? Fear of this little one that you struggle to find the guts to discipline because they may not like you?
- Will you be tempted to focus mainly on the physical needs of your children – designer clothes and expensive trips – to the detriment of teaching them Christian songs and prayers and continuing to do spiritual things at home with your teenagers?

What's a mother to do? In our short time together today, here are a few vital points:

1. **Live in the gospel** – Mothers, you need to live in the gospel. Due to our failures and frustrations, you need to remember every evening that Jesus Christ is your Savior. After all, after Jochabed's example and all that we've said you may have a good case of guilt weighing on you! You need to remember that when you cry out in frustration over shortcomings happening in your mothering that Jesus has forgiven you. He died for our sins on the cross so that we could have the comfort of forgiveness. You need to know that comfort every evening. You need to live in the gospel.
2. **Live the gospel** – Mothers then need to remember every morning that they are to "live the gospel." It is another day to directly do something spiritual with your children. It is another day to be the example of a godly woman who follows God's ways in all that she does. It is a time to model the fruit of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It is another blessed day to live for God.
3. **Teach them like they're leaving** – Finally, motherhood is a time to remember that you need to teach your children like they will be leaving you. After all, they will be! You need to come to grips with the fact that if you have a typical mother-child relationship, you will only have a short part of their lives with them before they are mired in higher education and eventually their own families and lives. You will not be holding on to them in your own household forever. Like Moses' mother, remember this and make the most of those mothering years!
4. **Pray continually** – You can do that your entire life!

And what results will God work through you? Will they be Moses-like? Will there be great accomplishments? History-changing acts?

Who knows? After all, you can't work the results. You might be blessed to see some short-term gems from your children. Maybe you won't see some until they are young adults. Maybe you will see new fruit when you're a senior citizen. Most likely you won't even see all the fruit God brings about through your labors. But you can't be caught up in the end result. You simply strive to be faithful in the certain day you find yourself today, and pray that God works through you.

Finally, after learning all of this it just doesn't seem right that we should have one day a year when we focus on thanking God for our mothers! Similar to Thanksgiving, one day of thanks would not be right. In fact, thanking God and our mothers on one day can sometimes seem contrived?

Therefore, if you have been blessed with an earthly mother for which to give thanks, may God lead you to treasure them all year. And if God has placed you in the precious position of being a Christian mother, may he bless you with wisdom and patience to carry out the duties he has placed before you.

May we do all of this to the glory of God, who in his grace has saved us and in his wisdom has given Christian mothers to raise the next generation! Amen.