

BY FAITH - MOSES

INTRODUCTION

Good morning everyone! Time to get into the message today. The next character we are looking at is Moses.

Moses certainly had an interesting life... he faced many challenging circumstances. So I am hoping that today's message is going to be really helpful to you.

Tough times have always been the perfect environment for growing great faith. A famous early church historian... Tertullian said: "*The blood of the martyrs... is the seed of the Church.*" In other words... tough times... breed tough Christians.

I also believe that today will be a special word for those who are dealing with disappointment. I will be honest with you, over the past few weeks... I have had to face different kinds of disappointments.

Can I confess? There have been a few times... when I have just felt really down. Heavy-hearted. Frustrated. Worried. Sometimes, desperately just wanting to take a long drive and get away from it all! I think the 'Corona-coaster' has been a rough ride for many of us.

But if you want to learn to thrive as a Christian... you have to learn how to deal with challenges and disappointments in life. Just ask Moses. I think his story is going to be spot on. So let's dive in.

Like so many of us... Moses' faith story.. actually begins with his parents... his mother in particular. She seems to have been a woman of remarkable faith! Quick shout out to all the amazing spiritual mothers out there! Thank you!

Her name was Jochebed, and I believe that her faith impacted and shaped her son's faith. Not only her though, but also Moses' father. Here is what the bible says about Moses' parents in Hebrews 11 verse 23;

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. (Hebrews 11.23)

You see... Moses was born into a very oppressive situation. Egypt was a scary place to live if you were Jewish.

Picking up from last week and Pastor Tristan... under the great leadership of Joseph... the Israelites had moved to Egypt during the famine. There they had grown and prospered... to the point where the Egyptians were starting to get worried about them! As a result, the Egyptians basically enslaved the whole nation of Israel to suppress their power.

It's really sad. We have seen this type of story repeated so many times in world history... where people's fears... lead them to oppress others! Please Lord - May this not happen in our country. May we not allow fear to lead to oppression.

But that is what happened in Egypt... Their leader, the Pharaoh of Egypt... came up with this horrendous plan to keep the Israelites under control... Let me read it to you from Exodus 1...

¹⁵ The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, ¹⁶ “When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.” ¹⁷ The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. (Exodus 1:15-17)

As you can see... this was an extremely dangerous environment for a little boy to be born into. Moses was born into this very ugly situation. Can you imagine what it must have been like for his parents?

It must have been awful. So Moses' mother knew her son's life was in danger... and she had to make a plan... So here's what happened in Exodus 2...

³ 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.

⁴ His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. ⁵ Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it.

⁶ 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. ⁷ Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, “Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?” ⁸ “Yes, go,” she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother.

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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.” (Exodus 2:1-10)

I cannot imagine what Jochebed, Moses' mother, was going through when she came up with this plan! This is one CRAZY plan. It almost looks like she abandoned him... but she did not. She had a plan, and was a pretty risky plan... like most faith plans are... even with his sister Miriam following him from a distance! I mean, how many of you would let your little baby float off in a river! I don't know if I would have the faith for that!

But I believe there is great faith in this story that we do not see.

Because miraculously, Pharaoh's daughter finds him, and then gives Moses' mother the job of raising him – what an amazing story. A faith story... a faith story that the book of Hebrews honours.

Here is the first point I want to make about faith today...

1. FAITH SEES A FUTURE WHEN THERE SEEMS TO BE NONE

When Moses' parents looked down at their little boy....I bet they could not conceive of him not having a future. We are told... that they saw that he was no ordinary child. So they hid him for 3 months before embarking on this crazy plan.

While we do not know... what they thought would happen... They were not prepared to accept... that there was no hope... and no future for their child... and that is where they are commended for her faith!

I suspect, like me, that many of the parents in our church family have been fairly concerned about your children during this time. You've been anxious about their health and safety, you've been anxious about their returning to school, you've been anxious about their education, their future. I know how you feel. And I am sure that Moses' parents would have a thing or two to tell us today.

Faith sees a future when there seems to be none!

Come on now... I really hope I am preaching to someone out there today! I know many of you are concerned about your jobs, your income, your children, your families, your future.

Can I speak the Word of God over you today??!!!

Don't be afraid! Live by faith. I am not playing down seriousness of the situation you may find yourself in. But I am calling you to be a people of faith... and not fear. Rise up men and women of God! Rise up Christian parents... Now is not a time for the faint hearted. Sometimes in the Kingdom... You've got to lay hold of faith. You've got to rise up! You've got to see a future, where there seems to be no future. By God's grace, You've got to see a way... where there seems to be no way. Amen!

Faith sees a future where there seems to be none.

So, Moses grew up with a foot in two worlds – he was the pampered grandson of the Pharaoh... but he was also the son of an Israelite slave, parents who had faith for his future.

But these two identities of Moses... did not mix well together... and when the tension between the two came to a head... he had a choice to make. Hebrews 11 says this about it;

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. (Hebrews 11:24-25)

Here is the next point about faith today;

2. FAITH CHANGES YOUR IDENTITY

Moses grew up... with all the wealth and status of being a Pharaoh's grandson, yet his identity... was that of an Israelite. Although he lived in the Royal household... He always saw himself as a Israelite. And his story shifts dramatically... when Exodus

tells us about what happened when he saw one of his own people being mistreated; Exodus 3;

One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. ¹² Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. (Ex 3:11-12)

Part of Moses' journey... was about finding his true identity. Moses knew who he was... thanks to his mother's hand in raising him... and his heart lay with the mistreated Israelites.

But sadly, this led him to murder... and to escaping into the Arabian Desert... where he became a shepherd, got married, and settled. The bible says in Exodus 3;

¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well. (Exodus 3:15)

In identifying with 'his people' or 'God's people' it looked like he blew it big time... because now... not only was he an enemy of his Grandfather, the Pharaoh, but he was also cut off from his real family – Now having to make his home amongst strangers.

So yes, Moses messed up horribly... by killing an Egyptian, but he was right to be outraged by the injustice he saw. He felt for them deeply... because they were his people, not just some strangers being mistreated. Initially, Moses' home was the palace, but his heart was with the Israelites in slavery.

His identity is what dictated his behaviour – the same is true for us.

What is your identity? Who do you see yourself as? Who you see yourself belonging to? Do you see yourself as a part of the family of God? The people of God? If you do, that will dictate your actions. If you believe and understand that you are God's child... and your worth is from Him, not from anything you do, it helps you to act in faith.

But if you identify yourself... according to how the world may see you – defined by race, by gender, by your bank balance or your social influence... you will act according to that.

Identity is a choice you make – Moses '**refused**' and he '**chose**'. What are you choosing and refusing based upon your identity as a child of God?

Here is the next lesson about faith... Point number 3;

3. FAITH MAKES TOUGH CHOICES

Sometimes your faith will lead you to making a tough choice. Have you experienced that yet? Verse 26 says this about Moses;

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. (Hebrews 11:26)

Think about all that Moses gave up in the Pharaoh's household. Think about it. It's the fairytale dream that everyone lives for, not so? ... Fame, wealth, popularity, the palace life! Come on... Who doesn't want a bit of the palace treatment?! Be honest now. Money, wealth, power, a couple of Egyptian concubines?

If your faith is the real deal... it will lead you to make tough choices.

Moses chose to give it all up. He made his choice, and he walked away from it all... and then much later, at the leading of God, he came back to lead God's people out as well.

It must have been such a difficult life decision.

Even the decision to come back. His life would have been in grave danger... he would have been a disgrace to his adopted royal family – yet he did it. His faith led him to make tough decisions.

He was resistant to begin with. It seems that he may have had a speech impediment... so he even bargained with God to send his brother with him as a spokesperson. You know the story...

But the writer of Hebrews uses interesting wording here – Moses **regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ** of greater value. What does this mean? Because we know Jesus was born about 1400 years after Moses?

Well, very simply. Jesus the Messiah was promised by God from the beginning... and the Israelites had been looking to him to bring salvation – Moses, despite growing up in the Pharaoh's household... also knew this... and he believed that God would send one to rescue them and bring salvation.

For him... God's plan was more important than the benefits he could have claimed for himself as the Pharaoh's grandson.

Tough choices are not easy. As a leadership of this church family... we have had to make some tough choices over the last few weeks. When the President announced that places of worship could open up for services for up to 50 people now in June... our initial reaction was one of excitement! – we have been missing gathering together in-person for over 2 months now!

Yet I feel for us... this is not the right choice right now. We have to think about the health and safety of our whole church family – we have those in our family who are ill, who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 more than others. So, we decided that now is not the right time to meet - it was a tough call.

Some people will disagree, some will say we should be meeting now and 'show more faith' and stop living in fear! Others will agree.

I do trust that you will see the bigger picture though... that while it is hard for us not to meet together - and it would be so much easier for us to have a service here instead of just online, it is just not the right thing for us to do right now.

Moses did great things for God, because in faith, he was willing to make tough choices. What tough choices is God calling you to make this week?

Here is the next thing we can learn from Moses' faith;

4. FAITH KEEPS FOCUSED ON GOD'S VIEW, NOT PEOPLES

Hebrews 11 verse 27 says this of Moses;

By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. (Hebrews 11:27)

How did this Moses, who had run from Egypt fearing for his life, find the courage to go back to face the Pharaoh? The bible says - He persevered, because he saw him who is invisible! You see friends - When you keep focussed on the real King... you don't fear the little kings.

So Moses faced his powerful Step-Grandfather who wanted him dead. We read this in Exodus 5;

This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.' ”² Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.” (Exodus 5:1-2)

So much was unsaid in this first meeting – was it an awkward meeting of two determined men? Was the Pharaoh furious to see Moses again? Or was he hopeful that Moses had come to make-up with him? Did some of the palace officials whisper to Moses; *“Why have you given all this up? It could have all been yours!”*

But Moses kept focused on God's view... God's plan... and he obeyed God's instructions – something that is not always easy to do.

Moses showed faith in God... when he followed God's plan instead of his own. His own plan had probably been to live out in the dessert, chill on the stoep, farm goats, and raise his family peacefully. I am 100% certain he was not dreaming of becoming the hero-leader of Israel!

But Moses looked to God. He pushed through all his fears. He never feared the Pharaoh or what he could do to him. He persevered, because he saw him, who is invisible. Our mighty God.

What about you my friend? Are you pushing through all those fears you are experiencing at the moment? Are you persevering? Are you seeing Him who is invisible – with you? Are you keeping your focus on God's view?

Having said that – it's also wise to be accountable. A lot has been done in the name of the Lord that was way off. I also appreciate how Moses sought out his brother Aaron, and they ran the plan by the elders, Ex 4 says;

²⁹ Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, ³⁰ and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, ³¹ and they believed. And when they heard that the

LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped. (Exodus 4:29-31)

While Moses chose to obey God rather than people, he did so... in a way that shows accountability – he also checked with the Elders, other people of faith.

If you believe that God has spoken to you about something... I would encourage you to do like Moses... and learn to run it by people of faith... who you trust.

Lastly today...

5. FAITH KEEPS GOING WHEN THINGS SEEM IMPOSSIBLE

As the story progresses, the challenges that Moses faced seemed to get bigger and bigger!

Hebrews 11 shares some of the significant ones...

Verse 28;

By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

Verse 29;

²⁹ By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. (Hebrews 11:28-29)

There is so much in here that we don't have time to get into today. By faith, Moses kept the Passover. By faith Moses trusted God as the angel of death passed-over. Go read it!

By faith... the people of God passed through the Red Sea... By the power of God... it split before them, to make a way... where there seemed to be no way.

Faith keeps going... when things seem impossible.

Right now... Some things seem impossible... Like a plague, the Coronavirus is a disease that is no respecter of persons... Like a plague, fear is sweeping the world. Like a plague... the economy is in tatters... things seem impossible.

But nothing is impossible for God!

By faith Moses led the people of God through these strange plagues, including that horrible first Passover where God sent an angel of death to kill all the firstborn's.

By faith Moses led the people through the Red Sea!

And these were not an easy group of people to lead – if you read the story of them getting to the Promised Land... you will see they were a fickle bunch... always questioning Moses... always grumbling and moaning and wanting to go back to Egypt!

I don't think any man ever put up with more complaints and lack of appreciation. He was such a humble leader. A good example of this is found in Exodus 15. After

Moses led them through the Red Sea, the Israelites travelled three days through the desert without finding water. And the bible says this;

“When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. . . . So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, ‘What are we to drink?’” (Exodus 15:23-24)

In many ways, I feel like we have hit a ‘Marah.’ We have arrived at a place in our journey that is uncomfortable. Distasteful. Bitter. Why does God lead us to Marahs like this in our lives? Ex 15 goes on to teach us this,

“There the Lord made a decree . . . and there he tested them.” (Exodus 15:25)

Friends. God allows these kinds of moments in your life... to test you. He uses disappointing circumstances, to check your reaction. He wants to know: “Do you really trust me?” Will you live by faith?

Moses was a godly man. It is why he is honoured for his faith... and God came through for him and the people of God... with miracles, upon miracles, to rescue them!

CONCLUSION – Lead into Communion

Church, it is so easy to give up when things are tough... and there is so much opposition. But faith keeps going... even when there is no clear or easy answer, faith keeps trusting God for a solution!

You know what church...

I know that many of us are facing huge disappointments right now.

I don't believe miracles are things we have left behind. Jesus said... that if we believe in Him... we will see great things happening. I think too often... we give up.

I think we give up when we feel like things are not working... when we feel that we cannot fix things ourselves.

Moses' faith was not in his ability to rescue the Israelites, but rather his faith was in God who would rescue them – there is a big difference there.

I will end with the words of our master...

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. (John 14:12-14)

COMMUNION