

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA**

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Scripture: Exodus 2:1-10

*"A Tale of Two Moms"*

**A BLESSED MOTHER'S DAY!**

Every time I preach on Mother's Day I have to say how appropriate it is that we honor our moms. I am so glad we do so as a nation. It is fitting to note that honoring our mothers on a specific day began in a church some 100 years ago. That's why it is on a Sunday. In fact, I just read that after Easter and Christmas, Mother's Day has the third highest church attendance of any day in the year. Here at St. Bartholomew's, it is number five behind Confirmation and Palm Sunday.

Mother's must be lifted up and recognized, for undoubtedly, the greatest responsibility and privilege a woman can have is to be a mom. God makes this clear in His Word. The first woman created was named *Eve* because she was "*the mother of all the living.*" God has given woman unique characteristics and gifts to bring children into the world, to nurture them, to feed them, to encourage them and to support them. In short, a mom shows a child more than anyone in this world, unconditional love. And whether your a mother or not, all women have that capacity, the capacity to reflect motherhood in everyday life. You see women are generally more sensitive than men to the needs of others, they are more patient and tolerant, more giving, and even tend to be more spiritual. And, I might add, they're prettier too.

Thank God for mothers. Thank God for women. God made both men and women in His image, but He also made us different, with certain distinguishing features and gifts. Why? So that He might bring us together and make us one to complement one another and provide the best environment for raising a family - the most important institution in a society.

**WHAT MOMS TEACH US**

And while it is true that moms teach us the most about unconditional love, they teach us about other things, too. Mothers teach us about foresight: "Make sure you wear clean underwear in case you're in an accident." They teach us about logic: "If you fall out of that tree and break your neck, don't come crying to me." Mothers teach us about maturity: "Eat your vegetables or you'll never grow up." Mothers teach us about religion: "You better pray that comes out of the carpet." They teach us about time travel: "If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!" Mothers teach us about contradictions: "Shut your mouth and eat your dinner!" Mothers teach us about contortionism: "Will you look at the dirt on the back of your neck?" They teach us about perseverance: "You are going to sit here until you eat every last piece of that broccoli." Mothers teach us about the weather: "It looks like a tornado swept through your room." They teach us about genetics: "You're just like your father." And mothers teach us about the circle of life: "I brought you into this world, and I can take you out."

Seriously, we owe much to our moms. Some of the greatest people in history recognized this. President George Washington, for example, said, "All I am, I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her." President Abraham Lincoln once reflected, "I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."

### **MOSES KNEW HOW IMPORTANT A MOM IS**

But there is someone else, in fact one of the greatest figures in the Old Testament, who could say the same thing. One who would become the man he was destined to be because of his mother. But this man, however, did not have just one mom, he had two. Do you know who he is? Please turn with me to **Exodus 2:1-10:**

*<sup>1</sup>Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. <sup>2</sup>The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. <sup>3</sup>But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. <sup>4</sup>His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him. <sup>5</sup>The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her. <sup>6</sup>When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." <sup>7</sup>Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?" <sup>8</sup>Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go ahead." So the girl went and called the child's mother. <sup>9</sup>Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. <sup>10</sup>The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."*

God gave Moses two mothers, and both understood the incredible importance of their roles. Both were used by the Lord to prepare Moses for the destiny God had ordained.

Recall that a decree had gone out from the throne of Pharaoh that every male child born to a Hebrew was to be thrown into the Nile and drowned. And since Moses' birth mother, Jochebed, was a Hebrew woman, she had a choice to make.

### **MOTHERS WHO CHOSE LIFE**

She could have decided to simply allow her child to be thrown away. She could have chosen death but instead, she chose life. It wasn't an easy decision. It meant she had to hide her baby for three months always in fear that Egyptian soldiers would discover the truth. And if they did, not only would they kill her child but punish her entire family for disobeying the King's orders.

Choosing life was not an easy decision for Pharaoh's daughter either. She knew the baby was a Hebrew baby (**Exodus 2:6**) Her father wanted those children dead. Her people felt threatened by these children. Again, the easy road would have been to let the child die. But she also chose life instead. You see, both mothers lived in a culture of death. Both mothers lived in a society that had decreed certain children shouldn't live. And sadly, so do we.

In Florida, there is currently a bill that would require abortion providers to offer pregnant mothers the opportunity to see ultrasounds of their unborn children before they make the decision to abort them. But the governor, Charles Crist, is expected to veto the bill because of political pressure. In Kansas another bill recently passed the state legislature that would outlaw later term abortions, the kind that Tiller performed until he was gunned down last year. There have been no later term abortions performed in Kansas since Tiller's death, but this bill too, is expected to be vetoed by the current governor.

Things haven't changed, my friends, we live in a culture of death.

And God will not be mocked. God punished Egypt because of their culture of death. I find it sobering to realize that the tenth plague God sent down upon Egypt to punish them. - Do you remember what that last one was? God said, ***“Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill...” Exodus 11:5.*** And it is not that the Lord poured out His wrath tit for tat, for the Pharaoh had many opportunities to repent but he didn't and finally this tenth plague of God's judgment fell on Egypt. God is giving our nation time but how much time remains to be seen. Sooner or later something has to give.

Moses, some 3500 years ago, lived because Jochebed and Pharaoh's daughter never gave in to that culture of death. They chose life. And let me just add that even as God pronounced judgment upon the land of Egypt, He provided yet another way out. He told His people to put the blood of the lamb over the doorposts of their homes and they would be spared. God does so for us today. Jesus Christ is our Passover lamb. His blood cleanses us from the guilt of our sin. If you have had an abortion, there is forgiveness in Christ. There is forgiveness for those who repent. Through faith, through the waters of baptism, God removes our sins as far as the East is from the West. He buries it in the depths of the sea. He removes it from our lives and remembers it no more.

And why does God do that for us? Because He is a God that chooses life; not just for the unborn, but for those of us who have made decisions that have brought us shame and guilt, decisions that have robbed our lives of the joy and promise God created us to have. It's only by the blood of Jesus that we have that hope in our lives - His death and His resurrection. And so Moses lived and became the kind of man he became because his two mothers loved life, and they loved babies.

### **MOTHERS WHO GAVE IT THEIR ALL**

The second thing I want you to see from this tale of two moms, is that Moses became the man he was destined to become, because his mothers did everything they could for him. Jochebed hid Moses in order to save his life. Other Hebrew mothers probably hid their children as well, but that very rarely

worked. I mean it’s kind of hard to hide a pregnant woman. They stick out in a crowd. And the Egyptians would have been watching. They would have been waiting for the day when she would no longer be pregnant and then they’d come for her child.

So, if that’s true, how could Jochebed succeed in hiding her child for 3 whole months? I don’t know. But with God's help she did. And she took action and she got creative. If Pharaoh wanted her child to be thrown into the river, that’s where she’d put him. But not before she had given her boy an edge, an advantage in life. She and her husband built a little boat for him. A basket covered with pitch so it would float. She then placed that boat in the bulrushes along the shore of the Nile. She doesn’t put him out in the current where it could be swept downstream. No she puts the basket in a sheltered place, a place where it could be found. And it’s very likely that she scouted around for the best place for him to be found. She wants him found by someone who has the power and influence to make sure he isn’t put to death. And the only person with that kind of influence would seem to be Pharaoh’s daughter.

There is no doubt God was directing and guiding Jochebed. God had a plan for Moses, and his mother was simply doing what was right. She did all that she could for her son. She even makes sure that Moses’ older sister, Miriam, is out there watching. And it is Miriam who suggests to Pharaoh's daughter that she knows someone who can nurse the baby – her mom!

Eventually, Pharaoh’s daughter becomes Moses’ adoptive mother. She loves the boy, takes him into her home and makes him her son. She, like Jochebed, did everything she could for this boy as well. **Acts 7:22** tells us that “*Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.*” Pharaoh’s daughter wanted Moses to have all the advantages her culture could supply. She wanted him to more than a common laborer. She wanted him to be a leader of men and a ruler of nations. And she succeeded in building him into a man who was powerful in speech and action. And so, she did everything in her power to give him an edge, an advantage fitting for the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. Both of Moses’ mothers loved him so much that they did everything they could think to do to give him every advantage he could have.

### **THE MOST IMPORTANT GIFT A MOTHER CAN GIVE**

But only Jochebed gave Moses the one thing that changed his life. This is where the tale of two moms parts. You see even though Pharaoh’s daughter supplied Moses with a knowledge of the wisdom of Egypt and gave him the best teachers and got him into the best schools, even though she had supplied him with all the training and education he needed to be a success in this world, **Hebrews 11:24** tells us that the time came when Moses “*...refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.*”

There was something Pharaoh’s daughter did not give Moses, something that could not be found in any of the universities of Egypt and that was a saving knowledge of the Living God; a knowledge of who God is and what He desires and what He has promised to those who follow Him. The truth is as parents and grandparents, and uncles and aunts, we need to realize that even with the most advanced education our

society can supply - without God at the center of our children's lives there will be an emptiness that nothing else can fill.

Do you remember King Solomon? He had everything a man could want and then some; wealth, education, power, success, you name it, he had it. Yet, what does he conclude? "***Vanity, Vanity All is vanity!***" (Ecclesiastes 12:8.) In other words, everything is ultimately meaningless and useless. At the very end of his book, he concludes with this advice: "***Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.***" Ecclesiastes 12:13

What did Solomon mean? Without God, life is meaningless and empty. Every person has a God shaped void that can only filled by our Creator. Moreover, only God can help us to reach our full potential. Only God can help us fulfill the plans He has for us. Once we know who God is and have a relationship with Him, then we will have meaning and purpose. Then we will have all that we need to meet the challenges of everyday life and fulfill our destiny.

Such knowledge is what Jochebed instilled in her son. At that point in time, there was no Bible like we have today. But she did have the traditions of faith handed down by her parents and their parents. She undoubtedly could tell her son about the promises God had made to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, about how God would someday free their people. She gave Moses a knowledge of God by sharing her faith in God. She told him what she believed. She told him what God had done in her life, and in his. And because God was real to her, I believe God became real to Moses as well.

And that's the reason why our children and grandchildren, our nieces and nephews, need to know Him as well. There will be times when they won't feel worthy, lovable, or needed. And they'll need to know that God will never leave them nor forsake them, that the Lord indeed has their back. But the only way they will know this is if we share it with them. Both moms showed Moses unconditional love. But only one shared the source of that love. We can do know less with our children, with our other family members, our friends, coworkers, neighbors, even strangers: that God in Christ is reconciling the world to Himself so that we can be free from sin and death and have eternal life. This, my friends, is the message of Mother's Day. This is what God wants from us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!