

Sermon: **Supporting Roles**
Text: **Exodus 1:8-2:10**
God's Word: **Psalm 124**
Date: **Sunday, August 23, 2020**
Preacher: **Rev. Becky Stephens**

Anyone familiar with popular culture will know their screen names well. Ross, Rachel, Phoebe, Monica, Chandler, and Joey. We probably know some of their real names . . . David Schimmer, Jennifer Aniston, Lisa Kudrow, Courtney Cox, Matthew Perry, and Matt Leblanc. But do you know James Michael Taylor, Maggie Wheeler, or Jane Sibbet? Without these people the stories that the stars of Friends tried to tell would be incomplete. Gunther, Janice and Carol (Ross' ex-wife) weren't the stars of the show but from supporting roles they made the episodes memorable. They are hidden figures. Often overlooked and even underappreciated but absolutely essential to the story.

I want us to look at two very obscure characters this morning that show us that it takes more than stars to make the story complete.

Exodus 1:8-21 (NLT)

⁸ Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done. ⁹ He said to his people, "Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are. ¹⁰ We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more. If we don't, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country."

¹¹ So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. They appointed brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down with crushing labor. They forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses as supply centers for the king. ¹² But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and spread, and the more alarmed the Egyptians became. ¹³ So the Egyptians worked the people of Israel without mercy. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter, forcing them to mix mortar and make bricks and do all the work in the fields. They were ruthless in all their demands.

¹⁵ Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave this order to the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah: ¹⁶ "When you help the Hebrew women as they give birth, watch as they deliver. If the baby is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live." ¹⁷ But because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king's orders. They allowed the boys to live, too.

¹⁸ So the king of Egypt called for the midwives. “Why have you done this?” he demanded. “Why have you allowed the boys to live?”

¹⁹ “The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women,” the midwives replied. “They are more vigorous and have their babies so quickly that we cannot get there in time.”

²⁰ So God was good to the midwives, and the Israelites continued to multiply, growing more and more powerful. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

Two unknown, unlikely women, names recorded in Scripture for history to remember. At the risk of their own lives they defy the order of Pharaoh to kill the Hebrews. Unwilling to participate in Pharaoh's murderous and brutal plan. Perhaps the first recorded act of civil disobedience. From a hidden, perhaps even overlooked role, these 2 women teach us incredible lessons.

Deliverance can come from unlikely deliverers.

When we think about the deliverer of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage we automatically go to the headliner . . . Moses. However, if you read the story carefully they delivered before the star deliverer was even on the scene. In fact, there would have been no deliverer if these women hadn't stepped up and stepped in.

We tend to think about those on the platform, those that premier, the elite, the highly gifted and charismatic as the ones who can bring change, produce freedom, and deliverance. However, I just wanted to remind you that deliverance can come from unlikely people! From the overlooked role, no cameras, no spotlights, no applause but God positioned in the right place to bring deliverance.

In this case an entire generation is saved. Their service saved people. Their service protected the destiny of the new born. Thousands of simple and perhaps overlooked moments where they offer laboring and birthing mothers cool washcloths to their foreheads, where they gently turn babies inside of wombs – where they listen closely for heartbeats, where they root for life with their encouraging words, “yes push”, “you are almost there”, “life is coming”. Simple acts that produce deliverance.

Don't underestimate your simple words, your simple actions, and your simple obedience because these ladies teach us that simple things produce profound results. Whose destiny are you saving right now? Whose future are you protecting right now? Whose heart is being softened towards God when they hear your voice?

Your obedience today may not produce fruit until tomorrow.

Some of us serve, volunteer and sacrifice for a short period and become discouraged because we don't see fruit immediately. We must learn to continue to remain faithful even in fruitless seasons. In due season fruit will come. The importance and impact of their simple but brave act wasn't realized until 80 years later.

Think about that. These ladies are protecting babies and 80 years later Moses stands before Pharaoh and with the aid of Aaron (83) demands that he let the Israelites go free.

The seed of faith planted often takes a long time to bloom and produce but rest assured your service, your act of faith, your kind response, your day of volunteering in 2020 will ultimately produce results. Wait for it. Watch for it. Count on it. Don't grow weary in well doing! Don't give up on the harvest regardless of how long it seems to take.

Serving others in your misery may be the key that unlocks your miracle.

Midwives were often thought to be women who couldn't have children themselves, so they were often pushed to the edges of society. That is why the statement at the end of this account that could be easily overlooked is so important for us to notice. "And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own." Blessed with their own children due to their service. Service in dry times can bring life.

The tendency is that if we are experiencing pain, trouble, hardships, and dry seasons we want to become inwardly focused and at times even selfish. We want to clam up and become miserable in our own misery. Just let me sit here and die. Let me suffer in silence.

However, these women teach us that service during your dry season positions you for God to set you up for provision! Another version says that He provided

households for them. It is as we meet the needs of others that we find our needs are met and we are provided for!

Galatians 6:7 (NLT) - *Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant.*

Ephesians 6:8 (NLT) - *Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.*

I know you might be miserable at the moment. Maybe you have experienced loss. Perhaps you feel the sting of sickness. You are overwhelmed with need. You are overcome with emptiness. You are faced with famine. However, take the position these midwives took - Step up and become a baby bodyguard. Even though you are tired protect someone else's dream, protect someone else's destiny, fight for someone else's miracle and stand on the fact that God will see your faithfulness and He will come through for you! What you see as pain God may see as plant! What you view as sacrifice God may see as seed! What you deem an inconvenience God may see as inception! Serve in spite of!

It takes more than the headlining stars to make the story complete. It takes all of us in a variety of supporting roles. What role will you serve?