

**SERMON BASED ON EXODUS 1 verse 8 to 2 verse 10 and
Matthew 16 verses 13-20**

St James', Buxworth – 24.8.14

From time to time we hear of children who have gone missing. The parents must suffer deep trauma. Today's reading from Exodus is unimaginable in terms of the cruelty of someone so threatened that he doesn't want the risk of any male children growing up to join forces and overthrow his empire.

Moses' mother realizes that things are not safe for Hebrew children: the pharaoh is out to kill them, so she has to give up her rights to care for her child in her own home amongst her own people. Instead she has to put herself forward as a nurse, be unknown as his mother and then let him go to a lifestyle that must be completely different from what she imagined, when he's older.

She is not the only mother with difficulties in the Bible. Eve was warned that childbearing itself would be painful; then there's Sarah, Abraham's wife, who was very old when her son was born; Hagar, Sarah's servant, was sent out to fend for herself with a child; women that Jesus met included one whose child had died; and Mary, the mother of Jesus was told that a 'sword' would 'pierce her heart'.

But the story of Moses is one of great hope – this child is rescued, as so many others are round the world today when they're in great danger. And rescue leads to him becoming a great leader.

So many examples of difficulty-and we could add to them our own examples today: children who get involved in trouble; those kidnapped or injured by violence; children who become ill or addicted to drugs; women who are lone parents.

What could encourage someone to become a mother?!

Perhaps two things:

1. Being like God means we will want to bring things to birth. God breathes life – into his creation, into people. If we are made in his image, then the greatest characteristic we could share is to bring to life. That means not only giving physical birth to a child but for those of us without children now, however young or old, it might mean encouraging young people, making them know they are loved, supporting their efforts even when we don't know them well.

As a practical suggestion – why not think about making a point of going into the Sunday school one morning to see what has been going on or finding out about sponsoring a child through a charity?

2. There must be a belief that God is involved in life, even when things seem to go wrong. Moses' life didn't go according to plan from day 1, but he grew to be a great leader. Jesus' life didn't go according to plan as he was arrested and killed. But for Peter, having watched and listened for a while, even though he wouldn't understand everything from then on, there was a moment of pinning his colours to the mast and declaring that Jesus was the one they'd waited for, the Messiah. It was a statement of hope for the future, even though there would be many uncertainties to come. That trust led to new direction, and resurrection from the dead.
3. Whatever happens, we see God as the protecting, life-giving God

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