

Subversive Women, Subversive God - Sermon Based on Exodus 1:8-2:10
by David Hindman on Sunday, August 21, 2011

They must've been scared out of their wits and terrified of what might happen. But they did it anyway. They acted in hope and trust that God was at work in the process and would see them through, and blessing beyond expectation would happen.

Who on earth am I talking about? The first who come to mind are the women we meet in today's Old Testament lesson. Five women do what others would think is crazy dangerous and risky, not knowing how it will all turn out, but trusting they will get through it and believing that blessing and life will result in the end. Even if they don't know how. And so two mid-wives lie right to the face of the most powerful person in their world and tell him Hebrew women are way better at birthing babies than Egyptian womenfolk. They can't follow Pharaoh's orders to kill those little boy babies because the birthing is done before they arrive. And when a boy baby is born to a Levite family, the mother hides him three months to save his life. When that won't work any longer, she floats him in a little basket in the reeds on the edge of the Nile River to hide him so others won't drown her beloved son in that same river. And lo and behold Pharaoh's daughter sees that little baby and basket at water's edge. Pharaoh's already been lied to and now his very own daughter will deceive him and disobey her father's orders. For someone

powerful he sure doesn't seem have much power. Instead of drowning the baby she names him Moses and takes him home to Pharaoh's very palace to raise him as her own. And there's that baby's sister who immediately steps out and offers to find a woman to nurse the baby. How convenient. Surely Pharaoh's daughter knows what's what. These three women all conspire to bring life and hope and blessing out of what could be an awful situation.

The next group of women who come to mind for me are those maids described in the book *The Help* and portrayed so powerfully in the recently released movie. A young white woman wants to interview Black maids working in white-owned homes in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s. It's a time of racial segregation and separation. Black maids aren't even allowed to use the bathroom in the houses where they work and have to use separate plates and dinnerware when they eat, always exiled to the kitchen. When Skeeter, the white writer asks to interview one, then two maids, they are terrified. They know talking about white folks publicly certainly can get them fired and might get them killed. But eventually the circumstances of their lives become too much to bear and not just two but many of these oppressed women maids find their courage and their voice and tell their story. They are still terribly frightened, not knowing what might happen and fearful there is at least a 50-50 chance things will end badly. But they

do it anyway, trusting in each other and in God to see them through, and hoping that God is at work in ways they cannot imagine but have to believe are true.

The last group of women who come to mind are ladies from this church. These women were organized by Helen McEwen and others who dared create an integrated kindergarten program operated here. At that time there was no Hanover kindergarten program. Integration was just barely being tolerated here. I imagine that was a frightening time for the women and the children who came. I suspect not everyone in town or in this church thought it was a good idea; in fact they might have been fiercely and vehemently opposed by some. I wonder how many friendships were broken and how many harsh words were expressed. Yet they trusted that when we do what difficult or not always readily understood, if it's done with a deep and humble desire to be follow the ways of God, God will bless it and honor it. And even if we don't get see our way fully God will take that faithful desire and still somehow use it and transform it for good. This is our strong trust and humble hope, thanks be to God.