

Unlikely Candidates: Service Over Status

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning again, my friends. Welcome here for this Sunday, October 2nd. My name is Kent Dixon. I'm the lead pastor here. And so welcome to people who are here in person.

I'm seeing people I haven't seen in a little while. I'm seeing new people who are here this morning. And so welcome to everyone. So a few quick pastoral announcements. I'm hoping to see many people this Tuesday.

I will be here. And we're having that meal at six o'clock. And then Dr. Shepard is launching us into a really, what we think will be a neat study series. So it'll be in two Tuesday pairs.

So the first Tuesday will be a topic discussion. So Dr. Shepard will present the topic, give us. So what we're doing is looking at some current topics in society that are important that we need to be able to recognize through a biblical lens how we should respond.

How, as the people of God, we need to be involved in these kinds of conversations. So each second Tuesday, so this first Tuesday will be a session and a topic presentation.

[1 : 09] Then next Tuesday will be a more open discussion time. So you'll have a week to process what you've learned and come back and say, okay, now wait a minute. This didn't resonate.

This didn't sit. This didn't fit. So that's how we're going to approach it. So we'll cover four topics over the series of eight weeks and then four discussion nights. So this is a format we've never done before and we're going to try it.

And if it stinks, we will never do it again. But my gut tells me it will be valuable because we can study the word of God, which is important, but if we don't apply, if we don't consider, if we don't engage the world with that lens, we're only getting half the picture, if that makes sense.

That's in my mind and my heart anyway. So we're hoping to have that. We'll be having them. We're going to probably start in the parlor. My hope is that we end up in here because we have so many people that we need to be in here.

And then Dr. Shepard can present his slides on the screen. So we'll see. So come, bring people, encourage other people to come, and we'll see how it goes. My worst fear is that it's a total waste of his time.

[2 : 22] So he comes, no one comes, and Dr. Shepard and I have supper together with three people and that's it. But, so that's the goal, is that let's not have that happen.

What do you say? So that's the goal. So as many, a little more serious note, as many of you are aware, Michelle's dad, Dave Neufeld, he has advanced Parkinson's.

And so if you look at a list of what end stage Parkinson's looks like, sounds like, feels like, he checks every single box. So he's sleeping a lot, he's not eating much, so he's in end stages.

And we don't know how long that'll be. So with that in mind, next weekend we are heading down over Thanksgiving just to spend some time because we don't know if we'll have Christmas. So that's reality for us.

So I appreciate, we appreciate prayers for safe travels, for comfort and peace for them. As most of you know, Rosemary's a nurse, she's retired, so she's been primary caregiving and stage Parkinson's in their home, which is what she wanted to do.

[3 : 29] She's stubborn. But she's recognizing now that the road is ending. And so, yeah, so there will be conversations happening next week and lots of things.

So just prayers for that. On the plus side, for here, I've invited Reverend Paul Hay to be our guest preacher next week. So Paul is a retired pastor within our denomination, and he will bring a Thanksgiving message from the book of Philippians titled Contentment Turned Upside Down.

And so I encourage you to be here and welcome Paul. Support Len and Carol as they lead the technical stuff next week. And so I look forward to hearing Paul's message and then hearing your feedback on it as well.

So now, this morning, we're continuing in our sermon series called Unlikely Candidates. And over the next several weeks, we're looking at specific people from the Bible, some who are familiar, some who are unfamiliar.

And we're gonna consider that how God may have chosen them, how he worked in and through them, through their circumstances. And then what we can learn, how we can apply what we've learned to our own lives.

[4 : 50] And my hope is that this will continue to be, I've gotten lots of good feedback, continue to be an enlightening and encouraging journey for all of us. Because again, what we learn from the Bible, shockingly, can be applied into our own lives.

So let's do that. That's what, that's my theme lately, if you can tell. So my hope is that this will be an encouraging journey. So I'm gonna confess, I love to be up here and confess things.

So I would classify myself as an Egyptophile. There you go. You know, oh, what? Says Leah. Yeah. Bless you.

Egyptophile. So in a basic way, if you look it up, that's defined as someone who loves Egypt. Okay? But honestly, I think that definition seems a bit thin when it relates to me personally.

And so I was reflecting on that this week. What is it? What, where does this come from? But I remember, and I was saying this to Michelle, I remember that when I was quite young, at some point, I became fascinated, particularly with ancient Egypt.

[6 : 00] There was the Tutankhamun's burial mask, which everyone knows. I don't have a slide of it. But everyone knows, instantly recognizable. I think it was on the cover of McLean's or Time Magazine or something.

And I just went bonkers. So it just resonated with me. And then I just, I was consuming all this information. And I was young. And I, weird.

So, I mean, perhaps we studied the culture and architecture in elementary. That's probably part of it. Maybe I read a book from the library. I was in the library a lot as a kid. That's a shock.

But something clicked for me. Something resonated for me and still does to this day. Big fan of Indiana Jones. Archaeologist, right? So I'm fascinated by ancient Egypt.

The architectural achievements of the pyramids and other technological advancements they had at that time. The ornate opulence of their tombs and their temples and their palaces.

[7 : 03] I've studied their mythology in university. And their history as well. And I guess you'd say, ultimately, that I'm an ancient Egyptophile. Although, hopefully not that ancient.

But. So, again, as I was growing up, the movie, The Ten Commandments, often played in our house. Christian family, right?

Not too surprising. Usually on TV at times. Like, we've all recognized Sound of Music plays at Christmas time. Ten Commandments usually plays on TV around Easter. So that also became a fixture of my life in a Christian household.

The Ten Commandments. And maybe we should watch it sometime here. It's an awesome movie. Super long, but awesome. So I grew up with this fascination, this admiration, with ancient Egypt.

And yet I also, coming from a Christian family, came to recognize that the nation, this nation of Egypt, was a significant opponent of God's plan.

[8 : 08] They were a significant oppressor of God's people, the Israelites. Israelites. And I think I silently marveled at this on-screen realization of this impressive civilization, and yet I also ultimately cheered and celebrated God's defeat of their oppression of his people.

So without question, ancient Egypt has played a significant role in the story and journey of God's people. I think we can all recognize and agree on that.

And they were a prominent factor, played a prominent role in the story of Joseph, and later, obviously, of course, Moses. So our sermon this morning is titled Service Over Status.

And our unlikely candidate is one who may already be familiar to you. But we're going to dig a bit deeper to see what new insights we can gain together. So let's hear the words of Exodus, chapter 1, verses 6 to 22.

So you can either look it up, Exodus 1, 6 to 22, or listen as I read it for us. Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died.

[9 : 22] But the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful. They multiplied greatly, increased in numbers, and became so numerous that the land was filled with them. Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt.

Look, he said to his people, the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them, or they will become even more numerous, and if war breaks out, we'll join our enemies.

Fight against us and leave the country. So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Ramses as store cities for Pharaoh.

But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread. So the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields.

In all their harsh labor, the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly. The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Pua, when you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see their baby is a boy, kill him.

[10 : 44] But if it is a girl, let her live. The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do. They let the boys live.

Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live? The midwives answered Pharaoh, Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women.

They are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive. So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous.

And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people. Every Hebrew boy that is born, you must throw into the Nile.

But every girl, let every girl live. So now that I've set the stage a bit, any guesses to who our unlikely candidate might be this morning?

[11 : 50] Anybody? Anybody? Moses. There's a good one. Moses is a big deal though. Moses. Anybody else? Midwives.

Interesting. Okay. More clues. Let's read on in Exodus chapter 2, verses 1 to 10. And this continues right where we stop. Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son.

When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. 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. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen. What would happen to him?

Sorry. Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it.

[12 : 51] 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. Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?

Yes, go, she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. 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. 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.

Do you know that's where the name Moses comes from? Mo means river and uses means to take out of, to take out of the water, Moses. Any more guesses?

Who's sticking with Moses? I need hands. Who's sticking with Moses? Iris, Carol are sticking with Moses. Elsa's sticking with Moses. Moses, wrong. While she is never mentioned by name in the Bible, various scholars have suggested her name was Thermusis or Bithia.

[14 : 07] And some Christian traditions suggest her name may have been Maris or Merho. But for our purposes this morning, we're going to refer to this unlikely candidate as, drum roll, Pharaoh's daughter.

And as we learned from Exodus 2, she'd gone down to the river to take a bath, right? So clearly she was bathing in denial.

So imagine the scene. A male, a Hebrew baby, is set adrift in a potentially dangerous river. If you've seen pictures of the Nile River, it is enormous.

So this baby was put vulnerable in a basket woven from reeds and coated with tar and pitch to hopefully make it somewhat waterproof.

So imagine, as Scripture tells us, imagine having to hide a newborn baby for three months, she hid him. Three months, newborn.

[15 : 12] For fear of him being taken from you and murdered. Pretty crazy, right, Chiho? So Chiho is expecting. So imagine, new baby, have to hide this baby for three months for fear of the baby, or you, or both, being killed.

So what a horrible situation for a new mother. Potentially, what are her options? Potentially risk your child's life by setting them adrift in a basket, or definitely dooming your child to death, by simply revealing their existence.

We have baby showers. You're not having a baby shower in Egypt if you're a Hebrew mom, right? So then all the people who discovered this baby in a basket, of all the people who could have found him, who could be worse than the daughter of the sworn enemy of his people?

So Pharaoh's daughter would have been surrounded by servants and attendants, no question. People who would have sworn their loyalty to her, for sure, to the royal household of Egypt, for sure, and then possibly even to Pharaoh himself.

So this basket and its precious cargo weren't discovered by Pharaoh's daughter alone. She didn't go, oh, neat, basket with a baby in it. She was surrounded by people.

[16 : 47] So she would have been observed by her attendants discovering this basket. It was not a secret, this discovery. And despite being the member of the family and nation that had declared themselves to be the sworn enemy of Israel, we're reminded in our scripture reading this morning that when she opened the basket, she saw the baby, saw that he was crying, Pharaoh's daughter felt, scripture says, sorry for him.

Despite the ruthlessness and hatred of her father towards the Hebrews, he would kill every single one of them.

His decree that all male babies of the Hebrews should be killed. Friends, it's compassion that we see from his daughter. And even more than that, scripture also says she recognizes the baby, as we read in Exodus, as, quote, one of the Hebrew babies.

She recognized the face and the race of someone who had been declared to be the sworn enemy of her father. And yet, she chose to serve someone in need.

She chose, rather than demonstrating loyalty to her father, his wishes, her people, her crown, her empire, her royal position, her family, friends, she chose service over status.

[18 : 26] Her attitude and priorities were clearly different from her father's. And though she would have definitely risked her father's wrath, for sure, and likely even risked her own position, her status within the royal household, she chose to protect and provide for this baby in need.

And to even go so far as to adopt him as her own son. That's Moses, by the way. For a princess of a powerful nation, a simple act like rescuing and providing for an innocent and vulnerable child would have been relatively insignificant to her.

Have you ever seen the pictures of the treasure troves in Egyptian tombs? This would have cost her nothing. Nothing. Not even remotely. Pocket change, probably, to care for a baby.

So it would have been relatively insignificant to her, in the grand scheme of her life even. But can you recognize the greater significance of this act?

God used this unlikely candidate, the daughter of the sworn enemy of God's own people, to nurture and care for and protect an innocent baby.

[19 : 52] Ensuring that this baby would mature into the very man that God would call to lead his people out of bondage in Egypt.

Isn't that amazing? There's God at work. Unlikely candidate. So what can we learn from this unlikely candidate?

I love this. I really enjoyed putting this sermon together. partly because I'm an Egyptophile, but this story is so fantastic. So what can we learn from her? What can we learn from Pharaoh's daughter?

One of the most powerful and ruthless rulers in the Bible. Pharaoh, right? And he was not the only one. If you read through the Old Testament, it's like, Pharaoh did this.

Another Pharaoh did that. Another Pharaoh did this. Another Pharaoh pursued Mary and Joseph. And all these, Egypt didn't like God.

[20 : 53] Did not like God's people. Not at all. So what can we learn? Well, first, as God's people, we are called to care for those who can't care for themselves.

Just as Pharaoh's daughter didn't hesitate to respond to someone in need, the same should be true of us. We are called to defend and protect the innocent.

And that protection can come in the form of words if we defend someone, in speaking against injustice or oppression rather than remaining silent.

Or it can also come in the form of our actions. If we're presented with an opportunity to help someone in a practical way, that may be meeting physical needs or emotional needs or spiritual needs.

That may be what God is calling us to do. We need to be aware when God is saying, I need you to take care of this for me.

[22 : 04] Second, as agents of God's plan in the world, what God calls you to do now, right now, or tomorrow, or later this afternoon, may not seem like much.

Right? But we need to recognize, just as happened with Pharaoh's daughter, something that may not seem like much could have significant impacts in the future.

God may only use us to plant a seed. And that may be all. God will tend that seed and nurture it and it will grow and we will have been a part of making his plan come to fruition.

So, something you say to another person, an action that you take to encourage or support them, could literally change the course of their life.

Can you recognize that? Think back to a time when you were having the worst day or you were in the worst season of life and someone just said, hey, I may not be able to relate but I'm here for you.

[23 : 20] Right? You can change someone's hopeless circumstances just with words of kindness and hope. So, it's fairly likely, unlikely, sorry, that Pharaoh's daughter recognized the God of the Hebrews in more than a basic sense.

She probably recognized that they worshipped someone other than Ra or their gods. It would have been extremely unlikely that she would have worshipped and followed the God of the Israelites and yet God still used her to achieve his purposes.

You see that? She recognized someone in need and she stepped up to help them and God took it from there.

Third, sometimes what God calls us to do we can recognize may not be the most popular or significant thing from our own perspective.

Right? Sometimes God may ask us to do something or say something or act in a way that draws attention to us in ways that make us uncomfortable, unpopular.

[24 : 42] That's reality. But we need to remember friends whose approval are we seeking. Even the approval of our closest friends and family members must take a back seat to seeking God's approval, to seeking God's will for our lives.

Pharaoh's daughter wasn't concerned with what anyone else thought about her choice to rescue that baby in a basket. She put it all at risk and we don't see any angst in the scripture text, right?

We don't see her hesitate. We don't see her think, ooh, what will my servants think? She acted. She clearly chose service over status.

And I believe that's what Jesus asks of his followers, including you and me. Jesus said in Matthew 16, verses 24 to 26, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Here's the upside down kingdom of God. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it. But whoever loses their life for me will find it.

[26 : 15] what good will it be for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

The words of our Savior. Friends, in this upside down kingdom of God where the first shall be last, watch and listen for the ways in which God is calling you to serve.

God is calling you to protect or to defend someone else in need. My friends, answer that call. Amen.