

Breaking Through Barriers

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[0 : 0 0] Stamos Miss Boisson T■■■ el tiempo Maestro Thank you.

Thank you.

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 that the baby is a boy, kill him, 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.

[2 : 0 2] 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 let every girl live.

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 not 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 to him. Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank.

She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened the basket and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him.

[3 : 0 9] 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Judy. We're starting a new sermon series on the book of Exodus.

We're going to actually look at Exodus for a while. And what we're going to be talking about is that God has a promise for us, a blessing that he's prepared for us. Sunshine and butterflies, a land of milk and honey.

[4 : 1 0] As he promised the Hebrew children, he also promised us. There's something particular for each of us that God has in mind, a dream he has for us.

We all feel that way when we give birth to a child, don't we? It says that Moses was a fine-looking baby. I've not met a wife that says I gave birth to an ugly child.

Has anybody? I've never met such a person. Of course, to his mother, he's a fine-looking baby. He's a good-looking boy, and they had dreams.

His parents were both from the tribe of Levi, which was a tribe of priests. So basically, his mother and his father had priestly bloodlines. They were people of God.

So can you imagine that after three months being with the baby, nurturing this little baby, caring for this little baby, hiding the baby when the Egyptian soldiers went by, she made a little boat and took the baby and put the baby in the boat and set it adrift on the Nile.

[5 : 23] Can you imagine? It's hard for me to imagine what it must have been like for her that day as she walked away from the Nile, went back to her home, having left her son in the river, assuming the worst, hoping for the best.

In the book of Romans, there's a chapter. If you have your Bibles with you and you want to follow along, keep your finger on chapter 8. And in verse 26, it says to us, God works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose.

God works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose. We're going to have promise verses through this series.

But how can this be good? A few years ago, my wife and I became orphans. I know we're not little children orphans, but our parents died.

A lot of our friends are struggling with their parents going through old age and the difficulties of it, and we'd like to have that opportunity. But we can't. Every day that goes by, there's something that's a reminder of the fact that they're not with us anymore.

[7 : 03] Sometimes we feel as if our lives are just filled with dismay. You might have come in and thought, really, a gravestone in the sanctuary?

But the truth is that sometimes dismay can just break us down and get us stuck. Tragedy occurs in our lives. Maybe somebody in the middle of their working career has their job eliminated, or they lose all their money, or their spouse walks out.

Or they get sick of a terrible disease. Good Christians end up in car accidents.

They fail tests in school. They have to struggle with fires. And we heard the struggles in the prayers this morning about coworkers and people that we know who've had not just one tragedy, but multiple tragedies in a row.

We have friends down in the Carolinas going through these hurricanes. You worry. It's wiping out everything they had. Their dreams are shattered.

[8 : 11] And sometimes it feels that way. And the truth is, is if you're going through those experiences of death and dismay, oftentimes friends are there in the moment of the tragedy.

Right at that very moment, they arrive and they try to help us through it. But after a couple of days, they go back to their life. And we're left carrying that brokenness.

In fact, in this passage for moments, it said that it can get to the point that it's so bad that our prayers don't even have words. Have you ever been that way? Where your prayers just become sort of a groaning, a moaning before God.

I was in the hospital one time. I had an abscess growing inside of me. And I was in so much pain that even in spite of the painkillers, I told my wife they had reduced me to a moaner.

You ever hear of those people? You go through the hospital, oh, I was a moaner. It was all I could do to try to get the pain to stop. Sometimes it feels that way and we can get stuck.

[9 : 28] It can block us from what we should be doing with our lives. Grief and dismay. But God doesn't want us to get stuck there.

He wants to break through. And the way we do that is through faithfulness. It's through remembering that God is faithful to us and if we're faithful to Him, God will work all things for good for those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose.

I had a bishop once who said that we need to work as if everything depends on us and pray because we know everything really depends on God. I kind of like that. Sometimes we have to trust God.

It's just that way. Anybody here ever been in a hurricane? A couple of you? Yeah. One time I was in a hurricane. I've told some of you about this. And I was about 10 years old.

And we were in a tent. We didn't know we were in a hurricane. We just knew there was a lot of noise going on outside. The tent was let down. It was a pretty good size tent, about 12 by 12.

[10 : 34] And my whole family was in there. And all of a sudden, at one point, in the midst of all that ruckus, my father said, everybody grab a pole. So we all grabbed a pole.

My father, my mother in her wheelchair. And us older ones grabbed the corner poles, right? The little ones grabbed the poles along the side.

And my dad had the big one in the middle. And all of a sudden, the wind came so strong that it lifted all seven of us up into the air. About two feet. Now, we had no idea what it was because we were just kids.

We didn't know. But when my dad said, grab a pole, we didn't say, well, Dad, why do we need to grab a pole? We didn't say, well, Dad, are you sure that grabbing a pole is the right strategy for a hurricane?

Right? We didn't say, Dad, it should be somebody else's job to grab the pole. It's not fair that we have to grab the pole. We didn't say, Dad, you should have thought of this beforehand.

[11 : 34] And that got us in a situation where we needed to grab a pole. I kind of wonder what would have happened if we did probably something worse than the hurricane. But we grabbed the pole.

Sometimes, we need to recognize that faithfulness means that we do what God wants even when we don't get it, even when we don't like it, even when we don't understand it. We all grabbed the pole.

So the mom trusted God. She actually was obeying the order of the king, which was, in verse 22, it was, throw the babies into the Nile. Well, not exactly.

She didn't toss the baby in the Nile. She made a little boat for him and she put him in the Nile. That's what the king said. The babies go in the Nile. She put him in the Nile and set him afloat. And you have to believe that she was going home and every word out of her mouth was a prayer to God.

Dear God, look after my little boy. After we do everything we can, sometimes we have to just let go and trust that God is still the God who controls the winds and the waves, that God is still the one who has us in the palm of his hand.

[12 : 51] She gave up her child because she knew that if she held on to him, she would lose him. So she gave him up with the hope that that would save him.

Later on, she's going to do it again when she gives the child up to the princess. God knows what we need.

That's what it says in Romans 8.27. God knows what we need. His spirit speaks to our spirit. And he intercedes on our behalf.

And we can trust in God's providence because along came a princess. What was a princess doing in the river?

I don't know about any of you. Have you ever bathed in a river? It's not exactly the cleanest place to go bathe, especially back then when who knows what they were doing upstream, right? The place for a princess is in a palace with nice clean water and clean baths.

[13 : 52] And that's the picture we have, right? This princess is down at the river. What the heck is she doing at the river? What got into her mind? People would say, what a coincidence. My wife calls those things a God incidence.

When God creates for us a situation totally unexpected and something happens because God is still watching over us. I told you that this book is in many ways the basis for the book of Matthew.

Very similar story. Remember the story of Jesus as a little baby and King Herod had ordered the execution of all the children under a certain age in Bethlehem?

But Jesus escaped miraculously to of all places Egypt. Well, this is much the same. God watching over his children.

In Matthew chapter 18, it says, See that you do not despise one of these little ones for I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

[14 : 56] Some people wonder about guardian angels. The Bible says it's clear. If nothing else, all the children have a guardian angel. Somebody watching over them, keeping an eye on them. And I believe he probably has an angel watching over each of us.

Speaking to God, saying, Do you see Moses down in the river? What can we do about it? So the princess goes down there and pulls the baby out of the river.

The passage says, We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose. But in some verses, it says, All things work together for good.

Sometimes, we need to do all that we can so that we can be faithful for people who are not able to be faithful. Sometimes, we need to be the ones that hold people up who are stuck and broken in the midst of dismay.

Like these midwives. Right? These midwives, who interestingly, according to this, didn't have any children. They weren't able to have children. So they spent their lives helping other women to give birth.

[16 : 06] What an interesting thought, eh? And so while they themselves had never experienced motherhood, they experienced a passion for all these little babies.

And when the Pharaoh said, Kill the boys before they're born, they didn't do it. Not only did they disobey the king, they lied to him.

Straight out, absolute lie. Well, I'll tell you, Pharaoh, what happens is, those babies are just so strong that they're just like, poof, out before we can even get there. So we're trying to do it, but you know, I don't know what to tell you.

Those babies, they just pop out faster and we can do anything about them. Really. The best part is, he believed it. I won't say anything about genders. But the truth of the matter is, is that they lied.

And in verse 17, it tells us why. It says, The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt told them to do. Because they feared God, they disobeyed his command and they lied.

[17 : 14] You know, sometimes, our choices are not as easy as others. People have an idea that somehow in life you have a choice between right and right.

Like, should I go to a concert or a party tonight or be with my friends? Oh, it's so hard. Right? Tough choice between right and right. Or that all choices are between right and wrong and it's clear.

You know what I mean. There's times we know what's right and we know what's wrong. We might choose wrong, but we know we did it. The choice was easy. Whether we make the right decision or not.

But you know, there's times when the choices between wrong and wrong. These midwives did wrong. They lied. It's not right to lie. But if you have a choice between lying or killing a baby, I think I'd go with the lying.

They had to make a choice. It was a hard choice. It wasn't an easy choice. I'm sure they turned to God and they were more concerned with what God thought than what other people might think.

[18 : 20] It's hard when you're stuck with that choice and sometimes it's hard to even be faithful to other people but we have to look and see where can we do it? How do we do it? I oftentimes find myself stuck with a situation where I can be with one person and not another.

Or I can be with family or I can be with church people. And I have to choose. What am I going to do? And somewhere along the line they'll disappoint someone. In this case they chose to be with the ones who were in need the most.

The princess came along. It's fascinating not only did she come along she plucks this little baby out of the water and she decides to keep it.

She knows that her dad has said that all these Hebrew boys should be thrown into the Nile. But she decides not to listen to her dad either. she decides that she's going to save this one child.

Now we don't know how many children the princess ended up saving. Maybe she saved a lot. Maybe only she saved this one. We really don't know. But even if all we do is help someone through the brokenness help someone through the dismay help someone in life that's better than doing nothing at all because we can't fix it all.

[19 : 39] There's a guy walking along the beach after one of these big storms came in and all along the beach there were these starfish and he's walking down the beach and tossing them back in the water.

And somebody came up to him and said you do realize what you're doing is hopeless. There's no way you can save all these starfish. It really won't make any difference what you're doing. And he picked up a starfish and flung it into the ocean and said made a difference for that one.

Sometimes we make a difference. Maybe for one person. Maybe one of those co-workers going through unbelievable tragedy. Maybe a family member or a friend or somebody else.

We can be the difference the faithfulness for God. We can make things different. Miriam.

That's Moses' sister. She was walking along the shore. Now she didn't go home with mom. You would expect it because she's a little girl. She's probably five, six, seven years old. And instead of going home with mom, she stayed with her brother.

[20 : 46] She was faithful to her brother. She decided not to give up on him and so she follows him along the shore. And she goes up to the princess and says, hey, need somebody to take care of that baby?

I got somebody in mind. Wow. For a little girl to have that kind of courage when most adults would have walked away not going near a princess. I know what's going to happen to me.

We can step into the brokenness. We can step into the dismay to help other people. You know, I have a lot of friends down in the Carolinas who are facing those storms. What do you do for them?

People ask me, what can we do? Well, I know people like to help with that so I put pots out in the back of the sanctuary. If you want to make a gift to the hurricanes, we'll probably try to do something later.

But you can just stick it in those pots and we'll get it to them right away. The United Methodist Church takes care of all the other costs and that money will go directly to help those people who are struggling right now.

[21 : 53] Because now is when they need the help. And maybe it's just a little we can do, but that little bit together with all the millions of people and churches today could transform that region.

At least let them know that somebody cares. God is good. And all the time in the passage from John 3 it says to us, dear friends, do not imitate what is evil but what is good.

Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. All things work for good for those who love him and have been called according to his purpose.

Everything can work for good. God is good but not everything in life is good. That's just the truth. We have a broken world where sin got in and corrupted our world.

And some things are just bad. my wife and I have lost our parents. We're orphans. We know what it's like to face death.

[23 : 07] Her sister died at 36. We've been to hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of funerals. And there's a point in the midst of that grief where it can immobilize a person and cause them to be so filled with dismay.

What are you going to do about it? Because some things are broken. Yes, we're so happy that Moses got saved. We're so happy that Jesus got away from Herod's soldiers. But in the book of Matthew we also read voices heard in Ramah weeping in great mourning Rachel weeping for her children refusing to be comforted because they are no more.

Can you even imagine? Can you even imagine you're sitting in your home and King Herod's soldiers come along. And for seemingly no reason just kill your child.

Some things are not good. Some things are just plain bad. What it says in that verse is that God can make things work for good.

Not they all are good. In that same chapter of Romans towards the end there's a passage we read at funerals. It goes like this. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

[24 : 29] Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? And then we usually stop. We pause and we skip a verse. But today we're going to read that verse.

It says as it is written for your sake we face death all day long. We're considered as sheep to be slaughtered. Wow. Can you imagine if I read that at the funerals?

We don't. We need to recognize that this passage is not written in flowers and daisies. It's written in the midst of a brokenness in the midst of when people are facing true struggles and problems.

And it goes on to say God will not abandon us.

Even if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil because God is with me.

[25 : 44] God is there. Even in the midst of brokenness God is there. It's so easy to give up on God when everything isn't perfect but God doesn't give up on us.

And he walks through it. And what happens is tragedy does change us. But it can either turn us away from God or turn us towards God.

It can even either cause us to rejoice in knowing that God has carried us through the valley or rejecting God because everything didn't work out the way we thought it would.

That hurricane down in Texas. I'm just going to share a little story they told afterwards. A week after the eclipse drew our eyes to the sky Texas is looking up again with photos of the emerging sun multiplying on social media a welcome sight accompanied by a joyful sound.

Victoria White and friends lifted the spirits of evacuees with a performance that echoed through the Lone Star Expo Center. They sing your glory shaking up the earth and sky.

[27 : 01] It's a moment that has gone viral much like football star J.J. Watt's fundraising campaign which has now collected more than five million dollars for relief efforts. The most difficult times seem to bring out the best in humanity.

For all the suffering there are images of hope and heroism and healing in a bitterly torn nation. Politics can talk about race and creed and religion and all this other stuff all day long but I mean here's proof right here that none of that matters.

If you tell her what you need she's a theme that permeates the shelter in League City where the good is measured in a gymnasium's worth of donations and kindness that's surging beyond boundaries. In the midst of tragedy these people turn to praise God and to help others.

If we keep faithful to God and if we become part of his faithfulness we can change we can change the dynamic God has a promise for your life God has a promise for other lives and it's our purpose in life to help make that happen.

Satan wants to use tragedy and dismay to break us and keep us from his promises but we need to break through those barriers we need to reject that dismay and hold on to God in faithfulness.

[28 : 23] Now one last thing you'll note that this verse ends with and have been called according to his purpose. You see that's one of the difficulties is that we don't always understand what God wants.

Faithfulness sometimes trusts when you don't understand. Faithfulness says get into the boat because the water's coming and you get into the boat you hold on to the pole you do what needs to be done.

We don't know what God's preparing and so we don't always understand. Some of you may not know but I actually was a pastor in the Free Methodist Church when I was 19 years old for about five months and then it became clear to me that this was not what I was supposed to be doing with my life so I went to work for several years and during that time I just thought well God when you're interested let me know I'm just going to take care of my family and do my thing.

You can talk to me when I'm old and gray and I thought you know if I ever did become a pastor I'd be so far behind the curve I wouldn't even know what to do. What I discovered is that God was using those years to teach me about things like budgeting about staff and about how to lead a large organization and what you're supposed to do in management things most pastors don't ever learn in seminary things I couldn't have found out if I would have become a pastor right away things I needed for this congregation just as Moses was being taught God needed someone who would be able to be identified with the Hebrews who they would call one of their own but could speak to the Pharaoh and the chambers of power in Egypt he needed somebody that was born Hebrew but also was an Egyptian somebody who understood both languages bilingual I was born working class and middle class so I'm sort of bilingual some of you understand that most of you don't so she returned her son and gave him away again to the princess to be raised as her own but in the meantime

God showed his sense of humor because when when that mother gave up her baby and was stuck in dismay and her little girl followed him along the shore the princess had the little girl go get his mother bring her back and said I will pay you to raise your own child I'm sorry I think that's hilarious that's hilarious because in the midst of brokenness God still smiles on us if we look for it so we need to break through the brokenness reject the rejection dismiss the dismay and live into the promise that God gave to us not because the world is perfect because in the midst of the pain we show what faithful Christians are actually about love people with all your heart go out and worship

[31 : 50] God with all your soul do what you can to change this world by loving God with all your strength and look for what God's wisdom is and I promise you God will make your dreams happen go in peace and be dream makers amen and be boarding I know how you can take your heart I know I know how you can make■■■■■