

“By faith Moses....was Hidden” Hebrews chapter 11 verse 23

Nearly 400 years has passed since the time of Joseph, when Jacob's family went to live in Egypt, in the region of Goshen. A new Pharaoh has come to power, who does not know about the part Joseph played in the salvation of Egypt from famine. Alarmed by the growth in the number of the Jews, he enslaves them.

But they continue to multiply, so Pharaoh takes the brutal decision to command the Hebrew midwives to kill every new born Jewish child. This they manage to avoid by claiming that the Hebrew women give birth before the midwives can get to them. So Pharaoh commands his people to throw every son born to them into the River Nile.

It is into this awful situation that a child is born to Jew of the tribe of Levi and his wife. In defiance of Pharaoh, she hides him for three months, and when that becomes impractical she places him in a basket and sets him afloat in the Nile among the reeds.

The only explanation that the book of Exodus gives for this (aside for the obvious love of a mother for her child) is that he was 'beautiful'. This word meant much the same then as it does now, so it doesn't give us much to go on, since every mother clearly considers her child to be the most beautiful baby ever to be born on the earth (even if it looks like Winston Churchill).

We can only speculate that God witnessed something to her heart about the child that caused her to risk her life by protecting him from Pharaoh's edict. Something, perhaps, that told her that he would play some significant role in the future. Certainly, Hebrews tells us that she and her husband did not fear Pharaoh.

Moses was the child who came into a world which was perilous for Jewish children. He wasn't the only one. From ancient times until the present day, to be an infant has been a dangerous thing to be in this fallen world. It is almost as if the devil both knows the potential in each child and sees the image of God in it, and seeks to damage or destroy it before it can grow to fulfil its potential. In previous ages he used human sacrifice and high infant mortality. In our day it is child abuse and abortion. Only the day of reckoning will reveal the toll of infant lives ruined and terminated in the course of human history.

But on at least two occasions in scripture, God has brought his salvation and deliverance into the world under the radar of evil in the person of a helpless baby. Here, it is deliverance for the Jews from their slavery. In Jesus, it is salvation for the human race from the consequences of sin.

Let us never underestimate what God is able to do through that weakest and most vulnerable thing, a new life born into the darkness of a fallen world. Each one is capable of bringing the light of Christ, and that light is what draws people to God.

Prayer

Father, we marvel at the sweetness of a new born baby, but how often do we pray for that child's future and the purpose you have for him or her? Each one is a human being of enormous potential in your hands. Each one is capable of turning to you for eternal life and being a powerful blessing in the world. And we thank you, Lord, that every infant lost to human cruelty is safe with you for eternity. In Jesus name, amen.

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