

New Kilpatrick

Sermon

8th August 2016

Exodus 2:1-10

Spirit... because you are imagination and vision and intent... the very energy that is love... we dare invite you... in these different muse... to inspire us... disturb us... and challenge us... to be where we haven't been before... and find the new life wait there... So be it... Amen

I imagine many of us will enjoy the Olympics... though I can't run... jump... cycle... row... shoot... leap over pommel horses... play tennis... swim... dive... or do any of the sports we are going to witness over the next fortnight... and perhaps most of us sitting here I dare say... fall into that category...

Most of us would probably fail any drug tests... given more than half the population is in debt to the NHS drug budget... but I will be watching... with everyone else because at last... there will be something different and hopeful and inspiring... in the news... that isn't about about Donald Trump's interesting take on life and politics... or about interest rates... or about Brexit worries...

There is a Chinese curse... 'May you live in interesting times'... I would like to know who it is who cursed us... because we certainly live in interesting times... so all hail the Olympics which will move us into a more *inspiring* and *aspiring* fortnight... hopefully...

I was sitting in one of Bearsden's coffee shops on Thursday... saying to my daughter with a sigh... 'It's Thursday... that means it's sermon writing night'...

'Okay' she said... 'Let me help you... What's the topic?'... who is this Jochebed anyway?'...

'Jochebed'... I said... 'was Moses' mother... who chose to believe into tomorrow... despite the crisis and dangers of the present... regardless of the sandman trying to rule the known world... lived towards the future with hope'...

Her single insight was... 'Well then... you can just talk about today then'... because she saw... as we do... the immediate parallel with today... and that feeling of the uncertain ground we are standing on these days...

But as we do so often... we find right there in the Bible... stories for our time... stories that have grown up and meant something to a previous generation... and who have chosen to keep telling these stories... because they have found in them... a moral response.. a positive, hopeful, faithful insight... into the same experiences... emotions... insecurity... and realities we experience today...

That's why these stories are so important to tell... biblical stories hold truths and insights into life... where humanity and faith tangle together... and guide us through the present... and move us to better places... and

So we have Jochebed... Probably not accurate factual history... That's not how these stories are essentially written... This is faith history... where the truth... is found in meaning... in the way the drama unfolds... The value is in the insight into faith and humanity the story brings...

Jochebed is Moses' mother... Jochebed... tradition has it... was born while Jacob... multi-coloured coat Joseph's dad... was travelling from Canaan in famine... to Egypt where his son Joseph was now second in command... Tradition tells us... 69 folk left Canaan... but also tells us 70 arrived in the land of Pharaoh... So some Rabbi's account for this disparity... as the birth of Jochebed... born between times... and this is significant to the character she was... and why she did what she did...

If you were a Hebrews but raised in Canaan... you did not know Egypt... and did not understand bondage...

But if you were a Hebrew born in Egypt... if that was the only thing you knew... all you could understand was Egypt... and bondage... not the promise of freedom... as you will have had no experience of that...

Jochebed was born between these two... between the boundary walls... someone who was neither of Egypt... nor aloof from it... and so a person with the ability to transform

Egypt without being transformed by Egypt... and that is what Jochebed did... transform what was evil without being altered by it...

She was a midwife... under orders to kill every Jewish boy under two... but was not taken in by that... and despite this national crisis of slaughter... believed into and invested in the future... by delivering... sheltering and raising a generation of faithful Hebrews despite Pharaoh's diktat...

Indeed... you can read this story as someone who chose to enable birth... despite the crises of the times... and indeed chose to give birth herself... to Moses... in the face of the powers that said she couldn't...

A woman of faith... A woman who believed into the future... and who invested in that future with her child...

Which is perhaps where we are ourselves right now... choosing to believe into the future... despite the crises of the time... and we heard from Regina a little about a way we are keeping to our tradition of doing that...

This is a moral way to live... to live for something else... to live for the future... to live for another generation... to live beyond now... but prepared to begin that reshaping and transforming...

We talk a lot like that a lot of the time... and you don't need to be a person of faith to do so... Politicians use such imagery all the time... environmentalists too... indeed... anyone who is a parent...

But people of faith hear these stories... as a promise... Not a wish... A promise... Stories where God... where love... intends this transformation to happen... and recognises these times... as sacred times... times that hold great value...

For when you live in interesting times... in times of crises... or transformation... how you choose to respond... gives these moments their value... and choosing to give birth to a child in oppressed Egypt... makes that moment you choose the future... invaluable...

Jochebed... born between the boundaries of Canaan and Egypt... She wasn't aloof from the issues... nor simply part of the problem...

Someone has said... do not be the stiff tree that will not bend in the wind... as if you have lived all your days in the heyday of Canaan... nor be the soft reed that bends in the wind... having been weakened by Egypt...

Be the wind...

Here is the insight for us all... that Jochebed brings from between one world and another... these are a valuable moments... choosing to believe into the future... We aren't stiff trees... nor soft reeds... People of faith are called to be the wind... to be the energy of transformation... knowing our stories tell us... we are in times of promise... and we choose the future...

The Olympics perhaps will give us cause to raise our heads above the crises... the words of fear from the US... the anxiety of Europe... but Olympics will come and go...

Our faith stories don't... Ancient as Jochebed and her son's story is... it still says to us... live into the future... invest in what is not yet known... believe into the promise... it is what we do best as a faith organisation... it is what every mainline faith is about... for we live between the boundary walls... of all our pasts... and all our futures... it is a valuable moment...

Living between two worlds... we recognise ourselves as agents of transformation... Jochebed's children... God's People... transforming our parish and neighbourhood... because this is a valuable moment... where we choose to give birth... choose to trust... and believe into... the promised future...

References

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