

The clip we just watched comes from my favorite movie when I was a little girl called the Prince of Egypt. For anyone who hasn't seen it, it is the well-known story of Moses and the Israelites and their journey from captivity into freedom. There is a quote in that movie that has always stuck with me and it is a word that spoke to me again two years ago in November 2016 when I along with many, was filled with great fear at what had recently taken place in our country, and it is a word that is still speaking to me now, perhaps even louder today. The scene takes place when all the people are terrified, and have good reason to be... The circumstances and what is happening are dire and seemingly hopeless and the darkness is closing in. But Moses in the midst of the fear and panic, speaks a prophetic word to them that I want to share with you.

He says, "Yes, it's true. Pharaoh has the power. He can take away your food, your home, your freedom. He can take away your sons and daughters. With one word, Pharaoh can take away your very lives. But there is one thing he cannot take away from you: your faith. Believe, for we will see God's wonders."

Now faith amidst dark times, it can sometimes feel very naive, perhaps dismissive, and very childish to believe against all that's going on, against all logic, against all circumstances that God is still at work and God doing a new thing. I think faith can often be a touchy subject as it can at times be used, has been used, and is still being used to justify inaction, passivity, and silence. "God will take care of it if we just believe enough, if we pray enough." Right? While I believe strongly in the power and movement of God, I also at the same time believe faith and action go hand in hand. They are partners working together and one without the other I find to be incomplete. While faith without action can verge on the side of almost dangerous, at the same time action without faith can limit the power of God, leaving little room for the spirit to move and do its work, revealing God's glory.

I believe our Scripture story today is a good example of these two concepts working in a balance and where we are introduced to three characters of great, moving faith. In the beginning of Exodus a decree has been issued out by Pharaoh that all the Hebrew boys would be put to death out of fear that the Hebrews were growing too numerous and could rise up against them. Can you even imagine the chaos, the sorrow, the screaming and wailing? What a horrific shameful terrifying time in history. And it is

easy to say, and I think perfectly ok to ask “God where were you during this massacre?” “Where were you when these babies were being ripped from their mothers arms?” It’s easy to read this story as I have countless times and be filled with anger, sorrow, grief. But in the midst of the darkness in the pages, we see in the few verses in Exodus chapter 2, a small glimpse of light. We can see that in the midst of such violence, oppression, injustice, that there was river flowing; a river protecting, empowering, restoring. We can see God at work behind the scenes, her spirit flowing amidst the terror, amidst the pain, as a mother named Yacobed, a woman of great faith, puts her baby boy in a basket, releases her grip and lets the water take her child to where he was destined to go. To where God has ordained him to be. And we all know who Moses becomes many years later... With the guidance and power of Yahweh how Moses rises up to his calling to lead the people into freedom.

I think though that as we read this Exodus story in its fullness we often overlook a few vitally important characters. We tend to exalt Moses, (as he should be) but by doing so perhaps forget the significant, essential role of his slave mother who courageously hid him for three months from Pharoah’s soldiers before secretly wading into the banks of the Nile and entrusting him to the water. Not only do we forget brave Yacobed but we lose sight of the faithful daughters in this story as well. The Hebrew daughter and the Egyptian daughter. Two young women, maybe they were even just girls , we don’t know, but two daughters, from two completely different socioeconomic backgrounds, two different religions, two different ways of doing life, of being, of existing. Two enemies who stepped into the river and by doing so become acquaintances, maybe even friends maybe even family, as Miriam speaks up with boldness from her lowly place, making a way for Yacobed to reunite with her baby Moses while Pharoah’s daughter rebels against the law by adopting the very boy her father commanded to be slaughtered. Not only was God raising up a deliver for the people, but at the same time was at work as the river empowered three woman deemed of little worth and purpose, to speak, act, lead. Where would our story be without their faith?..The river was flowing..

But is it still today? in this age? In this era as once again mothers are unjustly being separated from their babies? When once again oppression and racism is rampant and despair looms? Is the river still flowing?

For those of you who do not know much of my background, before I moved here to Boise last summer I was living in an intentional Christian community for a time called Jubilee where I was living alongside refugee families from all around the world- Asia, Africa, Central/South America. Just to give you a better picture, we were all on this huge patch of land together in rural Georgia with little houses dispersed amongst the property..There was a school where I taught...there was a garden..there was a river. We ate, sang, danced, cried, did life together and it was so beautiful, and it was so hard. I was the kids teacher for most of my time there and when it was sunny I liked to take my kiddos down to the river to play in it. And I recall very vividly one day watching one of my little Congolese students her name was Miriam she was 7 yrs old. I remember watched her with tears as she splashed around dancing, singing at the top of her lungs in the sunshine...."God is so good, God is so good, God is so good, he's so good to me!"....The river was flowing..

For one of those years I had the privilege and great honor of being invited by a single Honduran mother to live in her home with her and her 5 children. I called her Mami, (still do) and she called me her hija major- (oldest daughter). I recall multiple occasions sitting with my Mami after her long days of learning English and selflessly caring for her five kids. I remember holding her as she would weep and tell her story journeying from Honduras into the states...The desert, the train, the guns, the crammed back of the truck, the parched lips, empty stomachs, the fence. And while I recall those moments and am filled with great sorrow for the pain this family endured, (still endures along with many others like them), I am also filled with hope. The memory that stands out the most in my mind during our time together and that is forever engrained in my soul, is watching her dancing barefoot in our kitchen with Lisny and Dylan her two youngest by her side, a tambourine in hand with tears streaming down her face..."Quien Queen Quien Como Jehovah? Quien Quien Quien Como Jehovah? Who who who is like Jehovah? Who who who is like Jehovah?"

...I wonder if these are the same songs that the Israelites were singing with their tambourines in their hands after the waters parted, when Egypt and whips and chains were far in the distance and they looked back on their journey and remembered the faithfulness of their God...

I've never seen faith quite like the faith I've seen in all the many refugee families I have met and loved. There's something very powerful, something you can't just explain away, when people who have been through so much pain, such abuse, yet continue to sing out the name of the Lord with such boldness and confidence- When people who have stared death straight in the face rise above it and come out singing the name of life. These are the prophets of our age. These are our faith teachers, our leaders. The people who declare the goodness and faithfulness of God not from a place of naivety or power or privilege but from a place of deep experiential knowledge. The ones who continually keep being beaten down but sing out all the louder that God's grace, God's love is greater than the grief this life brings. It's is greater than the pain, greater than the suffering and that through it, we shall be given the strength to endure and we shall overcome.

Today where is the river flowing? Amidst the chaos, the agony and sorrow, as injustice reigns and oppression dominates, do we hear the sound of the river? Though we maybe cannot see it or perceive it, do we have the faith to believe that God is, like the prophet Isaiah spoke, doing a new thing? Making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland? Could God be right now, this moment, in some unknown place be raising up another Moses? Another MLKing? A Dorothy Day? Mandela? Chavez? A Romero? Maybe it is you. Maybe it's me. Maybe it's all of us. And maybe even, like the Pharoah's daughter in our story, we will need the help of the people from the other side too in order for the story to be complete. Sometimes rivers lead us to places we don't want to go, and stepping in is uncomfortable and scary, and it requires great courage, faith and strength to let go of our baskets, trusting in the goodness and faithfulness of God. Hoping, against all hope, believing that the river knows what its doing.

May we be a bold people. A people who grieve prophetically. May we be like little Miriam, a child victim of war, splashing in the water, singing of the goodness of her God. May we like my Honduran mother, who despite her dismal circumstances chooses to pick up a tambourine and cry out in a praise, who who who is like Jehovah. May we be a people who sing *amidst* our fear, *while* the tears stream down our faces, clinging to the belief that God is doing a new thing, that the river *is* flowing, and if we have the courage to wade in, that the living water will lead us home.