

Love in a Basket

Scripture Text: Exodus 2:1-10

Introduction

What is it about mothers that makes them so special? They nurture us, raise us, care for us, and love us from even before we were born. They even punish us when we get out of line. God has given mothers the innate ability to love their children unconditionally. No matter what a child does, a mother will still love her child. One of God's greatest gift to us are our mothers. Thus, we ought to honor them as God's Word instructs us to do. (Exodus 20:12) There are several passages in Scripture that speak of mothers and their care for their children. This passage speaks not about one mother, but two mothers who cared for the same child in unique ways. Their love for this child is not only descriptive of all mothers, but of God's care for us.

In the book of Genesis, God used the events in the life of Jacob's family, primarily through his son Joseph, to save his family and the people of Egypt. At the end of the book, there were seventy persons who had been saved from a great famine and who were living safely in the land of Egypt. By the beginning of the book of Exodus, though, about four hundred years later, the Israelites were fruitful and had increased greatly, so much so "that the land was filled with them." There also arose a new king over Egypt, though, who did not know Joseph and thought the people of Israel represented a real threat to the Egyptians. Then, something very bad happened. The Pharaoh could not control the population of the Israelites, so he ordered every Israelite male that was born to be killed. This is when we are introduced to Moses and his two mothers.

Moses' Biological Mother

Moses was born to parents from the tribe of Levi, named Amram and Jochebed. (Exodus 6:20) The passage tells us that Jochebed saw that Moses was a fine child. This could mean that she saw that he was good or beautiful, or it may simply mean he was healthy. Either way, Moses was no ordinary child. This phrase is similar to the same one used in the creation account found in Genesis chapter one, where God saw that everything He created was good. Just as in the creation account, things are good for a while, but something wrong happens and God's creation has to be saved, in this case, Moses. What do his parents do? Let us look at the following verses.

Exodus 2:2-3 ² *The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months.* ³ *When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank.*

This is a description of a mother who was worried about the life and future of her new born son. Imagine if you were Moses' mother and you knew that your son's life was in danger. What would you do? Moses' mother did two things to help her child that any good mother would do.

She Protected Her Child

I believe all of us would most likely do whatever we could to protect our children. This passage reveals the incredible effort Moses' mother took to keep him safe by hiding him from Pharaoh. Although Moses' father was not mentioned here, he was undoubtedly involved. In fact, we see this mentioned in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:23 ²³ *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.*

Amram would have been expected to work as a slave, away from home those long daily hours under the Pharaoh's burdensome orders. Jochebed, Moses' mother, was the one who had to carry out the risky plan to save their son. She did what any responsible, caring mother would have done by trying to keep him alive. She protected him by hiding him from the evil and murderous Pharaoh.

She Trusted God

Another thing we see is that Jochebed had faith to hide Moses for three months. There came a time, however, when she realized she could no longer protect her son. She devised a plan that meant letting her son go. She had to have faith and trust God to take care of Moses when she let him go. The term used here for what Moses' mother put him in is found in the flood story in Genesis 6–8, where it is translated “ark.” In the same way that God delivered Noah from judgment by having him build an ark that floated upon the waters, so God delivered Moses from Pharaoh's judgment by having his mother build an ark that floated upon the Nile River. God rescued Moses through the faith of his mother, who not only hid him but also entrusted him to God's care. Faith trusts God, knowing that He has delivered us in the past and will deliver us in the future.

Moses' mother was doing her best to protect him. This involved concealment in perhaps the best place to hide something outdoors in Egypt. Some believe that there was surely no attempt to place Moses in his little ark at a location where he was likely to be discovered. The whole intent was just the opposite — to hide Moses from being discovered and killed by the Pharaoh. Yet he was discovered—and by an Egyptian! In the story's surprising twist, however, the discovery by an Egyptian, which should have led to the boy's death, leads instead to a perfect protection of his life. This is God at work, providing deliverance in an unanticipated yet wonderful way. The faith of Moses' mother is rewarded. Now we turn to Moses' other mother.

Moses' Adoptive Mother

Moses was blessed to have not one mother, but two. Moses' biological mother cared for Moses as much as she could and trusted God to care for her son when she could not. Also, as someone who was a slave in Egypt, it took significant courage for Moses'

sister, Miriam, to approach the Pharaoh's daughter. (v. 7) Her bold move results in a situation that was probably imagined possible. And so, enter Moses' second mother.

Exodus 2:5–6 ⁵ Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. ⁶ When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

In a providential act, Pharaoh's daughter discovered the hidden boy, Moses. She is described as going down to the river to bathe and from there was able to spot Moses' little ark. The fact that Moses was crying when the princess opened the lid may indicate that she noticed the ark because she heard his crying and then looked for its source. That is what mothers do. When they hear something wrong, they seek to resolve it. We see a couple of motherly things that Pharaoh's daughter did for Moses.

She Pitied the Child

The first thing we see is that Pharaoh's daughter recognized that Moses was a Hebrew child and took pity on him. She had compassion for him. Any adoptive parent knows the love they have when they see a child in need of care and are in the position to give it. Pharaoh's daughter not only pitied the child, Moses, she also rescued him. She had him brought to her and into the safety of her care.

She Provided for the Child

Miriam wisely volunteered a nurse she knew well (her own mother). Imagine Moses' biological mother hearing from Miriam that the Egyptians—the enemy—had found her baby boy she had so carefully hidden! She must have feared the worst. Now imagine the reaction when Miriam told her mother that Pharaoh's daughter rescued Moses and wanted to care for him. On top of this, Miriam was able to convince Pharaoh's daughter to get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby boy and Jochebed was going to be able to care for her son. The baby boy once in grave peril received royal protection, his own mother raised him in his early years, Pharaoh's daughter actually paid Jochebed to care for him, and the princess formally adopted him. What a wonderful turn of events, just as if God had orchestrated it. Was it courageous for Pharaoh's daughter to save a Hebrew boy, adopt him into her household, and raise him as her own son? Did Pharaoh know what had happened? We do not know, but it was the motherly thing to do.

God's Mother-Like Love

The very qualities we see described about Moses' mothers in this passage also describe our Heavenly Father. I want to be careful here to not give the impression that God is our Mother, because Scripture affirms Him as our Heavenly Father. (Matthew 6:1, 9) But God does have mother-like qualities. Look at the following characteristics.

God Protects Us from Harm

Both of Moses' mothers protected him from Pharaoh's murderous plot. His life was spared by their loving protection. Many times in Scripture, God reveals Himself as our loving protector. In fact, the safest place to be is in the presence and will of God. David wrote several times about God's protection when his enemies were trying to kill him.

Psalm 18:2 ² *The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

Children will often run into the loving and safe arms of their mothers. When life becomes scary, children will go to mom. The truth is, though, mom's care for us is a description of God's protection of us. He is our deliverer and our refuge. You can go to Him when danger or uncertainty knocks on your door.

God Draws Us into a Personal Relationship

Moses name is a beautiful picture of being drawn out of danger and into the safe and loving arms of a mother. In Hebrew, Moses' name sounds like a word that means "to draw out", thus he was called Moses because Pharaoh's daughter "drew him out of the water." Moses' adoptive mother drew him out of the clutches of death and into a safe relationship with her. Moses name would have further significance later when God used him to draw out the Israelites from bondage in Egypt and into freedom in the Promised Land. So it is with God and His dealings with us. God draws us out of the danger and slavery of sin and into a personal, life giving relationship with Him.

John 12:32 ³² *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."*

The good news of the Gospel is that God draws people to Himself by the cross of Jesus Christ. In many respects, the life of Moses pictures the life of Christ. Moses was rescued from Pharaoh like baby Jesus was rescued from King Herod. (Matthew 2:13) Moses became the servant of a God who led Israel out of bondage and into the Promised Land. Jesus was the Suffering Servant Who delivers us from the bondage of sin and leads us to the true Promised Land in Heaven.

God Adopts Us into His Family

Moses became both a child of slaves and the adopted son of a princess. We, too, are born into slavery (of sin and death), but God delivers us from that bondage and adopts us into His household. Look at the following promise.

Romans 8:14–15 ¹⁴ *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.* ¹⁵ *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

God offers a new life, an abundant life, with Him through His Son Jesus Christ. We can escape God's wrath on sin and accept redemption through Jesus Christ. Everyone of us who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior has been adopted into His family. We are rescued from slavery and adopted into royalty. That is good news!

God Gives Us a Glorious Future

Lastly, God gives us a blessed future. Mothers are concerned about their children's future. Both of Moses' mothers gave him a blessed future. That is the desire of all godly mothers. They want to give their children a good future. They will do and sacrifice whatever they can to give their children such a future, just as Moses' mothers did. Likewise, God has given us the greatest gift through the greatest sacrifice — the death and resurrection of His Son — so that we can have a glorious future. Anyone who responds to the Gospel and accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior has a blessed hope for everlasting life. That is the reward of being a child of the King.

Conclusion

In closing, mothers are a gift from God. They are uniquely created to care for us from the moment we are conceived on to adulthood. Genuine motherly love is unmatched. It is unconditional. Maybe you have fond memories of your mother. Maybe she is alive today and you still enjoy spending time with her. Maybe she has passed and you miss her and long to be with her again. Maybe you are a mother. We thank you for your God-given care for your children.

Maybe, however, you have not had a good family life. Maybe the story of Moses' biological mother or adoptive mother is not one you can relate. Maybe you do not know what it is like to experience the unconditional love of a mother. The good news of the Gospel is that you can still experience mother-like love. Though God is our Father, He demonstrates many of the characteristics of a mother's love and care for her children. He protects us like a mother. He draws us into a personal relationship with Him. He adopts us into His family. He also gives us a glorious future, if we only accept it. If you have not, come to Him today. That is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!