



Sermon-based Guide for Reflection and Discussion

Week of
March 13

Scripture: Exodus 1:15-22

Sermon Title: *“Subversive Power”*

The Book of Exodus starts with an account of earthly power, almost the encapsulation of the brutal power of a broken world. The Pharaoh will practice infanticide to rid Egypt of the growing presence of the Hebrew population. So, he commands that all the male babies of the Hebrews be killed at birth.

The first act of subversion against this evil comes from the Hebrew midwives. They fear God more than they fear the Egyptian King, they preserve the lives of the Hebrew boys. Even though their power is very limited, and they face very real repercussions, they use the power that they have for good, and for life.

Pharaoh’s daughter has power. She’s a woman in a patriarchal society so the power is somewhat limited, but she certainly comes from a position of privilege. She makes a choice here, to use her power to help the vulnerable child that she meets. It shouldn’t be lost on us that her compassion for Moses is because she has a face-to-face encounter with him. Absent that, it is hard to believe that she would risk taking him in.

All of the women in this story (midwives, Moses’s mom, sister, and Pharaoh’s daughter) demonstrate what it means to use power, however limited, to subvert immoral authority.

Have we been open to encounters with those at risk? Are we willing to put our privilege at risk for them? What does it mean to fear God more than human authority? What is the role of subversive compassion in our lives?

Questions:

1. Read Exodus 1 and Exodus 2:1-10 for more of the story.
In your own words, describe what is happening in this story.
2. What do you think is the motivation for Pharaoh’s daughter to rescue Moses?
Why does she go against her father’s law?
3. Can you compare, from your own life, a time in which you changed your mind about an individual or a group of people? Why? What motivated you?
4. In both Exodus 1 and Exodus 2:1-10 we witness individual acts of justice. These are also acts of justice against a *system* of injustice.
Name some systems of injustice in our world.
What should the response of the church be to those systems?