

The young princess went every day down to the Nile to bathe. She had ladies-in-waiting with her, carrying her robe and towels, ready to comb her hair and rub her skin with perfumed oils. The basket caught her eye among the papyrus reeds, and she had one of her attendants go get it. The basket had been waterproofed with pitch, and they heard a baby's cries from inside. So carefully they pulled the lid off. *It's a boy*, someone exclaimed, as if witnessing a birth. *This is one of the saved children. The Hebrew boy my father is having killed.* And just like the midwives in last week's story, filled with compassion instead of hate or fear or obedience to her father's murderous decree, Pharaoh's daughter gave no thought to "otherizing" (is that a word?).

She became, in that moment, a rescuer. A savior is not too strong a title for her. *This is a fellow human being, and the gods have floated him into my bathwater, and I am being tested*, she might have thought. She did not adopt him right away. But apparently he was raised in the palace, maybe in servants' quarters where his "nanny" could care for him, nurse him, change his diapers, carry him around and sing him Hebrew and Egyptian nursery rhymes. Once he was weaned and began eating solid food, and could walk around and use the bathroom like a big boy, Pharaoh's daughter made him her son, and gave him the name Moses. If it was an Egyptian name, it just meant "son." But in the Hebrew language, it could mean "taken out of water." One day, he would wonder what his birth name had been. We will never know. He was Moses, now, a member of Pharaoh's household, maybe not a prince but definitely not a Hebrew, not a slave, not an immigrant or foreigner.

Who was this savior woman, this daughter of the genocidal Emperor? Was she maybe the daughter of a foreign wife whose heart went out to this innocent baby? Was she embarrassed at her father's racist politics, his paranoid fear of slaves becoming too numerous? Scripture is silent on these questions except for one: she used her position, her privilege as we call it these days, to do the right thing: to save a life and later to raise a fellow human being.

Lisa mentioned in last week's sermon how America is sorting itself into two sets of identities, blue and red, that determine how we vote, where we live, where we shop, what we drive, what books we read, what podcasts we listen to, and so on. Identity is the obsession of our time, and none of us seems immune. Some read the news off and on all day long, and talk about national politics as if they had breakfast every day with Rachel Maddow or played tennis with Stephen Miller. As if Nancy Pelosi was their sister or they chatted with Mitch McConnell when he handed them their bag at Lund's. Others of us are more sane, and check up now and then on the national news, but it is not the dominant soap-opera in which they are living. I want to be more like them!

But national politics are hard to ignore, because the stories are all organized to tug at our heartstrings, or our prejudices. We want the bad guys to lose. We want the other team proven so wrong that they go away and never come back. And many of us are as addicted to the reality series called national news as any fanatic Packer fan or Yankee hater.

Identity is what those heartstrings are made of. If I see someone waving a banner about America being a white nation, my white self reacts *no, we are not!* If I see a new Ethiopian restaurant moving in to a storefront in Linden Hill that has been, until now, a useless gift shop, I think: *YES! I'm going to support those guys!* If I know a student is gay, my protective self, my straight-male ally self thinks *good for you. Was it hard to come out to your parents?* But if I hear that another student wants Trump to win, I don't ask them to tell me more. I just assume the worst.

I'm tall, old-ish, male, the eldest child, of French ancestry, a native of Detroit, a teacher, Episcopalian, married, a father, a transplant Minnesotan, an Enneagram Two, a do-it-yourselfer, a quilter, a Myers-Briggs INFP, and so on. I live around the corner, speak several languages, love to travel, and am optimistic about the future of the world despite the best efforts of many friends and family to scare me. This place, St. John's, is utterly central to my life, because all my identities are affirmed here.

You may remember a sermon I gave awhile back about how we love to divide the world into two kinds of people: us and them, right and wrong, Republicans and Democrats, optimists and pessimists, saved and damned, and so on? It's scaled dualism, the two-ification of reality. The producers of our national political reality show have discovered that humans LOVE dualism, especially when it reveals how right we are to be on this side of the fence, and how wrong, clumsy, unattractive, and bad are those on the other side. Dualism sells. It gets eyeballs. It's clickbait. Notice what you click on this week to see if it's true. In my case, it's depressingly true, because I really wish I was better at practicing what Jesus preached.

Which is monism. Oneness. Unity. We believe in one God, made known in three ways. We believe that our species is descended as science confirms, from one line of Africans, who went forth and multiplied. We filled the Earth. We believe that Pharaoh's daughter is our mom and Moses is our brother.

And Miriam is our big sister, hiding in the reeds, having helped her mom put the basket boat in the water. Having followed it downstream to see if it would land in a safe place. With good people. Maybe she even waded out a few times and pushed our hero in the right direction. Sang to him inside his ark. She and her mother didn't see him up like that so he could drown. The basket was a lifeboat, not a coffin. She saw Pharaoh's daughter come down to the shoreline and see her baby brother, and she saw

the compassion. The lady was no dualist like her father (*is this baby one of us or one of them?*) She saw what the Bible would one day call "the image and likeness of God" in Moses, and that's all she needed to know.

So Miriam said something like, *your ladyship, begging your pardon, but I see you have found a baby. Would you need a nursemaid by chance? I happen to know someone who, um, -er, is available* Of course she was *available* Just a few hours before, she had nursed her son for what was perhaps the last time, if the plan didn't work. But it did work: *yes* said Pharaoh's daughter, her eyes narrowing to scrutinize this slave girl. *As a matter of fact, I do need a nursemaid. What a nice coincidence* Did she wink at Miriam? I doubt it. Did she wink at her ladies-in-waiting? Maybe. But she joined the little conspiracy, and Moses would never know he'd been separated from his mother. He'd never imagine that she'd risked drowning him herself rather than have Pharaoh's men do it. A few hours after his last meal, Moses was in his own mother's arms again, although this time in much nicer rooms than the slave hut.

This story tells us how Moses got a new identity, and his old one became a secret identity, like Tony Stark's Iron Man or Diana Prince's Wonder Woman. Raised as an Egyptian, Moses was also Hebrew. The story we're following for these seven weeks features the Oppressor's daughter who becomes the Liberator's mother. The native nurtures a foreigner. A rich one saves a poor one. But instead of this being an abstract political slogan, it's an intimate commitment. Pharaoh's daughter's adoption of Moses is not just a political gesture, but a political commitment. Day after day, she lived and breathed oneness, and turned from the easy temptation of dualism.

We were all babies once, including our beloved Jesus. Our parents all made room for us and cared for us, some well and some quite imperfectly. We were all drawn out of the water of the womb, like our hero Moses, and our family kept watch over us, like Miriam. Strangers have given us shelter, education, and meaningful work. We are both us and them. Good and bad. Egyptian and Hebrew. Soldier and midwife. Pharaoh and Pharaoh's daughter.

And so, let us not be smug and dualistic, but instead let us see ourselves and each other as God made us to be: we are all one, undivided selves, and undivided from each other.

Let us watch for whatever little basket may be floating toward us

Let us trust that someone will open our little basket soon and break into a wide smile when she sees our little face. Amen.