

Advent Theme: Boxes that Hold Great Treasures
Third Advent Service

Text: Exodus 2:1-10 (NIV)

¹Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, ²and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. ³But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. ⁴His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. ⁵Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. ⁶She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said. ⁷Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" ⁸"Yes, go," she answered. And the girl went and got the baby's mother. ⁹Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. ¹⁰When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

Theme: A Small Box that Contained Israel's Deliverer

When we were kids, we liked it when the biggest present under the Christmas tree had our name on it. However, as we get older we realize that big things often come in small packages. Think of the box that holds an engagement ring, the envelope that contains a check or the package that contains an ipod. The best gifts are not always the biggest ones.

Last week we looked at a huge box. Noah's ark would have been over 100,000 square feet, about ½ the size of the new Woodman's store in Menomonee Falls. That ark literally held the whole world because it held every creature that would survive the flood. The word for Noah's ark is the same word in Hebrew as the one for the basket into which Moses was placed when he was a baby. The word simply means "box." This was a small box that contained Israel's deliverer.

I. It took both faith and some ingenuity for Moses' parents to save their son.

He was born at a most inopportune time. Pharaoh had ordered that every Hebrew baby boy should be thrown into the Nile. Then a Levite woman and her husband had a child. It must have been horrible while she was expecting, knowing that the order had been given that if this child was a son, he would be killed. When the son was born, she saw that he was a good child. She loved him. How could she expose him to the elements and let him die. So she hid him. When he got too loud, she got a basket and coated it with tar and pitch, as Noah did to the ark. She followed the law by placing the child in the Nile, but she had her daughter watch over the child.

However, God was also watching over that child. Pharaoh's own daughter drew him out of the water and took him home with her. She even hired Moses' mother as a nurse. In that way Moses grew up



with his mother, but was also trained in the Egyptian court. This child, who was born at an inopportune time, would be raised to be the leader of God's people.

There were two births that came at the most convenient times in the 1st century. Zechariah and Elizabeth had waited for years for a child, but the Lord never gave them any children. Now they were very old. When the angel told Zechariah that his wife would conceive, he doubted it. Because of his doubt, he was not able to speak until after the child was born. Our Savior was conceived by the Holy Spirit at a most inconvenient time. Mary was not married, and people would talk. Her fiancé Joseph even decided to break off the engagement at first. Just before she gave birth, they had to travel all the way to Bethlehem. When they arrived, there was no room for them except in a barn where she gave birth.

Children are not always born in the best of circumstances. Sometimes parents feel that they are too young. Other times they are surprised when they thought that they were finished with children. Sometimes parents feel that they are not ready financially, and they wonder how they are going to survive with another mouth to feed. Sometimes children are not conceived the way that God planned within marriage. Like Moses' parents there are times when we think, "This is not a good time to have a child."

II. God used this "fine" child to deliver His people.

God planned to use Moses to deliver His people from their bondage. It would take a long time until this plan would be carried out. Moses didn't visit leave the Egyptian court to visit his people until he was 40 years old. It was then that he saw an Egyptian beating one of the Jews. He killed the Egyptian and fled to Midian. He was married and began his own family. He was living in Midian for another 40 years when God called him to return to Egypt to deliver his people from their bondage. Moses tried every excuse that he could think of to decline God's call, but God was firm and sent him to deliver Israel. Through 10 plagues, God would bring His people out of Egypt. He opened the Red Sea to help them escape Pharaoh's army, gave Moses the 10 Commandments at Mount Sinai, and used Moses to lead His people to the promised land. It all took place through this child who was saved from drowning in the Nile by that little basket that he was placed in. God has special plans for this baby who seemed to be born at a most inopportune time. It ended up that he was born at just the right time.

God also had special plans for those two boys who were born 2,000 years ago. John the Baptist would be the forerunner of the Savior. He would prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of the Lord as he called them to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. God planned to do something very special through this child. In fact, his birth was even prophesied in the Old Testament.

The greatest deliverance of all has come through our Savior Jesus. We were held in bondage to sin, death, and all the power of the devil, but Christ came to free us from them. When His hour came, He was raised up on the cross. There He suffered and died for our salvation. On the third day He rose as our Savior. Paul puts it this way in Galatians 4, "*When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to deliver those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*" Christ came to deliver us in an even greater way than Moses. He was born at just the right

time to deliver us from all evil.

All children are gifts from God. The slogan for Planned Parenthood is that every child should be a wanted child. One of their websites (PP of Indiana) states that when a woman is expecting, she should determine whether she wants this child by the following criteria:

- Does having a child fit the lifestyle I want?
- Would it conflict with my education/ career/ other activities?
- Am I financially ready to be a parent?
- Is my partner ready for parenthood, and if not, do I want to raise a child alone?
- Am I patient and responsible enough to deal with the 24-hour-a-day demands of a child?
- How would another child affect my family?

-If the answer to any of those questions is no, and the child is unwanted, they believe that it is okay to destroy the child in the womb.

But the Bible never says that some children are a gift of God. It simply says that children are a gift from God. They are a real blessing. The circumstances might not have been when we wanted. They might have even been wrong, but God loves that child, and He wants that child to know Him as their Savior. He has plans to use that child in special ways in this world.

An example of such a child is the 9th child born to a Bavarian immigrant family in a Pittsburgh suburb in 1874. The family was so poor that he had to work in the coal mines when he was 12, and then he moved to work at his brother's barbershop when he was 16. However, that young man became one of the greatest baseball players of all time, and if you were given a small package with his baseball card in it, you could become rich. A near mint condition card of Honus Wagner sold for \$2.8 million in 2007, and a nun is hoping to receive about \$200,000 for one of his cards in poor condition from an estate that she inherited. In all of the things that she received, the most valuable item was that box that contained a ragged baseball card. (It's interesting that his card is so valuable because he didn't allow a tobacco company to put it in cigarette packages) Honus Wagner and millions of other children like him were not born under the best of circumstances, but they have gone on to do great things and be blessings to many people in this world.

The small box that we considered this evening contained a child. Moses was a child who was not born under the best of circumstances at all, but God had plans for him. Our Savior didn't seem to be born under good circumstances at all, but God's timing was perfect. He came at just the right time to deliver us from every evil. Every child is precious to our Lord and should be precious to us also. They are small gifts that God gives to us to bless us in great ways.

Amen.

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