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SERMON TITLE: **Surprising Faithfulness Saves a People**
SCRIPTURE: **Exodus 1:5-22**
DATE: **September 12, 2021**
View online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also Hebrews 6:7-12

We are beginning a series called “There’s No Small Part in God’s World.” As we study the Bible we might concentrate on the Abrahams, the Moseses, the Deborahs, the Peters and Pauls, but as truth would have it, there are many others that made the work of those leaders happen. There’s no small or insignificant person in God’s world, though we as humans may feel that small efforts do not matter.

Over the next several weeks we will explore the difference that your “average Joe and Jane” make. We will study lesser-known people of the Bible—sisters and brothers; parents, relatives and friends—or simply someone who is at the right place at the right time, and does something that makes a difference.

God uses people who are significant to him, but don’t see themselves as significant.

This will help us see today what the church culture is supposed to look like. What is God’s big picture? How does God use people who might feel insignificant but whom God sees as most significant?

We start with Exodus 1. Exodus 1 begins with the words **“And these are the names.”** “And” is an interesting way to begin a book. Most translators leave that word out. But it is important. Near the end of Genesis we read, “These are the names,” and it lists the people who went to Egypt. There were 70 of them, Jacob and his descendants. (Gen 48:6) The “and” shows this is one story. The story begins in Genesis where God makes a promise. The writer wants you and me to see the continuation of the promise. It is the present enacting of the promise made by God, the ongoing fulfillment, with emphasis on its enduring and unending nature. Let’s read it. READ Exodus 1:5-22

- We are talking about three things:
1. God’s promise
 2. What to expect from the environment we live in
 3. How did God overcome the cultural problems through average people?

GOD’S PROMISE

God spoke to Abraham and gave him this promise:

“Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. . . . All the families on earth will be blessed through you.” So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed, and Lot [his nephew] went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. . . . Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your descendants.” And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the Lord, who had appeared to him (Gen 12:1-4, 7).

Later, when Abraham was 99 years old God would reiterate the promise:

“I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.” (Gen 17:2)

Did you notice the twofold promise?

- 1) Descendants would become a great nation through a guarantee of countless descendants.
- 2) Land to call home

Promise Outcome: All the families of the earth will be blessed.

And then there were years of silence and many difficult circumstances.

- ~ Famine caused Abraham to move them to Egypt
- ~ Abraham and Lot separated
- ~ He and Sarah failed to conceive for 25 years
- ~ He had a baby with Sarah’s handmaiden Hagar
- ~ Sarah threw Hagar out

Waiting was not easy. Life was not easy. *What happened to the promise?*

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE ENVIRONMENT WE LIVE IN

When you look at God’s promises and judge by the circumstances of life, God’s promises will seem to lose every time. Abraham’s life was filled with

- ~ natural disasters;
- ~ differences with family members;
- ~ disappointments, like inability to get pregnant;
- ~ poor decisions as a result of trying to solve those problems;
- ~ and domestic violence.
- ~ His family moved to Egypt to avoid a famine, which at first was great, but
- ~ then they became enslaved.

Ever had any of those problems? Sure we have!

Life's problems often cloud our view of God. We question whether God cares or has forgotten us or maybe we think it is just naïve to believe!

And so, how do we keep a steady eye on the best thing in life, a relationship with a faithful, promise-giving God?

Yet, remember, after a long period of silence, it finally came. Isaac was born. His name means laughter. He was rightly named. And he had children, and so on and so on, all in the midst of challenging life circumstances.

HOW DID GOD OVERCOME THE PROBLEMS THROUGH AVERAGE PEOPLE?

Exodus begins . . . So seventy descendants of Abraham moved to Egypt, lived out their lives, died, and were forgotten. NOTE THIS:

But their descendants, the Israelites, had many children and grandchildren. In fact, they multiplied so greatly that they became extremely powerful and filled the land.

Ahhhh . . .

I will make you into a great nation.

I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.

God has been silently at work all these years.

Throughout this part of Exodus 1 we read:

- But their descendants, the Israelites, had many children and grandchildren. In fact, they multiplied so greatly that they became extremely powerful and filled the land. (v. 7)
- "Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are." (v. 9)
- But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and spread." (v. 12)

Did you notice God's promise suddenly became fulfilled?

Again, they were a threat due to their great numbers, and the Egyptians brutalized them out of fear. Life is filled with many challenges. The fear turned into attempted genocide.

But there, within God's people, were some women—midwives—who believed God; who trusted God's promises; and who kept God's ways. They looked at those innocent babies and refused to destroy them. At the cost of their own safety, they refused to obey the king's orders.

They saved the babies. ***This was the first major act that paved the way for God's people to move out of Egypt to the land God was giving them.*** God was at work through unknown nurses.

These women were just doing their job—like nurses and other medical personnel today. How often have nurses made a

difference to you? They may not see themselves as significant but God uses us to make a huge difference in someone's life.

Sometimes a government's laws are unjust. These women quietly stood up, even though it would be dangerous to do so. They did not confront the powers that be—after all, they had no power. They simply did what was right in their job.

This gave God the ability to fulfill his promises. Because average people feared God by doing the right thing, God rewarded them with families of their own.

These people had no power, no persuasion, no privilege. In fact, their circumstances were quite the opposite. They were poor and had no rights at all.

Do you feel that you cannot make a difference because you feel insignificant or unimportant? God used the insignificant people in the world to do something extremely valuable because **to God, every person is significant.**

God defeated a powerful, unjust, evil pharaoh through two insignificant faithful midwives.

Feeling insignificant? You can make a big difference as you live out your faith. Are you stepping up to express your faith in your environment? If you stand up for God's values, God will use you to work out God's great promises. Hebrews says, "Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent." That is always the temptation when we feel that we are too small to matter.

God is still growing his family. That's God's promise. Faithfulness on your part will save others—will save a nation.

AMEN