

She Did What She Could Do

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[0 : 0 0] Exodus, we're going to be in chapter 2 today, Exodus chapter 2. The title for this sermon, and it's really just the one point of the message, is she did what she could do.

And here we're referring, of course, to the story of Moses' mother, who finds herself in an extraordinarily difficult situation.

Now, the secondary title, Boniface Babymaking, I'll explain that later on. Toward the end of the message. Just to catch you up, if you weren't here last week, we are working our way through the early part of Exodus.

And last week, we saw that God had blessed the Jewish people in their captivity and had caused them to be fruitful and to multiply. Exodus chapter 1, verse 7 says, but when the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong so that the land was filled with them.

Now, again, as I mentioned just a moment ago, we tend to think of all the weaknesses and limitations associated with having children. All the things that the world tells us related to kids.

[1 : 0 9] But the Bible says here and in many other places that to be fruitful is to be strong. In God's eyes, people with lots of children are exceedingly strong. And Pharaoh, we have to give him a little credit, is seeing things at least that well.

He's understanding the same thing. He sees that the Jews have grown exceedingly fruitful, and he is concerned that they are a direct threat to his power.

So in the next section of chapter 1, he thinks he might slow them down a little bit by increasing their toil. And this would have included, by the way, both men and women. There were no split duties per se.

Both men and women working extraordinarily hard day after day, mining and producing brick and so on and so forth. But it turned out that even after a hard day at the brick factory, the Hebrew husbands and wives still had enough energy to engage in a little riverside rendezvous.

So in spite of Pharaoh's best efforts to exhaust them, they grew even stronger. And then Pharaoh tells the midwives to kill all the boys upon their birth.

[2 : 1 8] The midwives feared God, and they themselves grew stronger. Finally, Pharaoh commands his people to go to house to house, and whenever they found a new baby boy, they were to throw that child into the river.

Which brings us to our text. Exodus chapter 2, verse 1 simply says this. Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son.

And when she had seen that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. Now the first thing to observe this morning, just from this little overview of the text, is the extreme stubbornness that the Hebrews had in their baby-making commitments.

In Acts chapter 4, the Jewish council commands the apostles to stop preaching in the name of Jesus. And they famously say, we choose to obey God rather than man.

And the result of that choice is that they grew fruitful. Numbers were added to them daily. Well, we see the exact same sentiment at work with the Jews in Egypt.

[3 : 2 6] Pharaoh is doing everything he can to stop them from being fruitful and multiplying. But they choose to obey God rather than man. And the Lord keeps making them stronger.

Now, it is really easy to look at this passage and sort of fail to step into it and imagine that we're living in these conditions. Would you, just think about this for a minute.

Would you have the fortitude, the courage, the courage required to be fruitful under these situations? Would you have the fortitude, the courage, the energy to be fruitful under these situations?

I imagine with the threat of immediately losing your child to infanticide, the temptation was there to simply abstain or to use whatever birth control methods were available to them at that time so as to prevent what would assuredly become the heartbreak that followed.

Now, I think in many respects, the book of Exodus is not so flattering of the people of Israel. In fact, one of the ways that historians generally, one of the reasons historians generally accept it as truthful is that you really won't find many ancient accounts so disparaging of the people that wrote them that were made up.

[4 : 53] Like, if you're going to tell a tale about yourself, you probably aren't going to show yourselves as being, you know, faithless and so on and so forth. But I think in this particular moment, we see them at their peak.

We see them at their peak faithfulness. They are actually, I think, performing with more faith than many of us would perform under half as difficult a situation.

The fact that they just keep making babies is actually an extraordinarily courageous and gutsy thing. The truth is, is that there is always, well, at least there's often throughout history, some pressure put on Christian families to not be fruitful and multiply.

What we're seeing in this passage is an extreme example. But the truth is, is that we're actually living under what I would call the Malthusian spell that's been around for the last 200 years.

Every one of you in this room was created in an environment that is actually quite hostile to children. None of us are old enough to have started before old Malthus.

[6 : 05] So let me tell you a little bit about Thomas Malthus. In 1789, he produced an essay on the principle of population, where he observed that the increased food production usually led to increased population.

The more crops grew, the bigger families got. And the power of population, he said, is indefinitely greater than the power of the earth to produce food.

So Malthus predicted that within a short order, the population would grow too large for people to be fed. And so he began, Malthus was a minister, by the way.

He began to encourage, essentially, depopulation. He took an antinatalist stance. Let's make fewer kids. This is where the whole idea of overpopulation, the whole myth of overpopulation, first began to be discussed.

He wanted to restrict the population's footprint, and that became in vogue. We cannot have too many babies. The land simply can't support it, became the argument. Now, Malthus's theories were eventually combined with Darwin's to create something called eugenics.

[7 : 19] I'm sure many of you have heard about eugenics. This movement believed not only in the overall reduction of population, but also in the elimination of inferior races or cutting certain people off from future genetic progeny because they were deemed to be genetically inferior.

The truth is, is that even in our recent history, many of the people that we're told to respect in history, men like Winston Churchill or Teddy Roosevelt, held to eugenicist views.

Now, the one that we probably all know about, I would suppose, is Margaret Sanger. And she is really the one that got us the closest to some condition like we're seeing in our text under Pharaoh. She really did want families to kill their babies. She said things like this. A marriage license shall itself give husband and wife only the right to a common household and not the right to parenthood. She wanted to separate marriage from childbearing. I think she was pretty successful in that, by the way. I think in the popular imagination, those two things are held in separate categories now.

[8 : 31] Not in the Bible, but popular imagination. She said, no permit for parenthood shall be valid for more than one birth. She also became to be, she grew darker as time went on.

She said, but for my view, I believe there should be no more babies. The most merciful thing that the large family does to one of its infant members is to kill it. And in a private letter she wrote, we don't want the word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population.

Now, as I mentioned, Malthus was a pastor and Sanger, of course, was not a pastor, but she relied heavily on pastors to get a platform.

When Sanger set out to make her war on the black population, she found countless black ministers willing to give her a platform in their churches. So this insanity carried on until the 1960s when the ZPG movement came into being.

ZPG equals zero population growth. In 1968, Professor Paul Ehrlich wrote a book called The Population Bomb. And the cover of the book includes the phrase, while you are reading this book,

four people will have died of starvation, most of them children.

[9 : 44] This movement is the direct ancestor of the climate alarmism movement and various other overpopulation myths that are still with us today. Now, that quick run through antinatalist history is simply to say, you know, we're not living in as ferocious antinatalist time as Egypt.

We are living in an antinatalist time. And I think it's important to understand that you're living, whether you're having kids or you're beyond that time, you're living in a period of time in which there is actually just a constant effort to propagandize you out of being fruitful.

The truth is, is that for over 50 years, there have been alarmist statements made. New York should have been underwater many times since now. And the Arctic ice cap should have melted many times since now.

We should have run out of oil in the 1960s and so on and so forth. And what's going on here all goes back to Malthus. It's this idea of zero-sum thinking.

Now, moms, this is a very important concept. Zero-sum thinking. What is zero-sum thinking? It's essentially not believing that a god of the universe exists with infinite resources who can meet your needs as they happen.

[11 : 00] Now, I don't think any of you here are Malthusian. I don't think any of you are with Margaret. I don't think any of you here are in the zero-population growth movement.

But I will tell you this. Over years of walking with ladies I respect and pray for and hope to encourage, there is a sense in a mother's heart at some point that's simply this.

I do not have what I need to do this job. There is, in many respects, a I'm not, I can't measure up to this.

I can't do this. So you're not thinking about global crop production, but you are thinking about dinner. And you're saying, I just don't have what it takes.

Now, I'm going to talk more about that in a minute, but I remember my wife, when we kind of decided to enter into homeschooling, she would just wake up. Now, I've learned since then, but she's always looking for an excuse to have insomnia.

[11 : 59] But it was early on. And early on, she would just wake up in the middle of the night and say, my kids are never going to learn to read. She was right. That's a secret we have kept from your congregation.

No, she would be so panicked. My kids are never going to learn to read. And most of them wound up learning how to read. And my kids are never going to make it into college. And my kids are going to be dumb and so on and so forth.

And all of that was actually Malthusian-ish. Get it? Get it? The fruitfulness that God requires of me will not be supported by his faithfulness.

It's kind of a common thought. And just so we're clear, before we move on to the next section, we are not in an overpopulation situation.

Much of Eastern Europe will have 20% fewer people by 2050. Japan is the same. There are 30 million men in China, 30 more million men in China than women.

[13 : 04] You know, in 1970, 1 in 10 women reached the end of their reproductive years without a child. 1 in 10. Today, that number is 1 in 5. When you examine women 30 to 38, you'll find that nearly 40% of them in America are childless.

Nearly 40% of women 30 to 38 are childless. This is a propaganda campaign that's been going on for quite some time. Not as aggressive as the one we see in our text, but similar.

It rhymes. It's not repeating, but it rhymes. The similarities are there, but there's some differences. One of them is, in this moment, the Hebrews responded with more faith than many of our contemporaries are.

I wouldn't put that label on this congregation in particular, but I would say that when things were much worse, the Hebrews responded with much more faith than what you see evidenced in popular culture.

They couldn't be exhausted into abstinence, which is more than we can say for a lot of us, if we're honest. They couldn't be threatened. Even the prospect of bringing a baby into the world, only to watch that baby getting thrown into the river, was not enough to restrain them.

[14 : 36] The pragmatism we often pat ourselves on the back for is Malthusian. We just don't believe there's a God waiting for our baby in the river. And there is.

There is. And when we act like there is, God blesses us. Now, again, I realize that I am preaching to the choir in many respects.

But given the amount of cultural discouragement raining down on you, I just want to do the opposite of that. Yes, the world is a hard place. It has been much harder.

And no matter how hard it is, God is faithful. He will be faithful to you, Mom. One spicy author of a book called *The Boniface Option* writes it this way.

If we are to rebuild Christian civilization, if we are to ever recover the things that have been lost, we need our young women to be willing to exchange the fleeting pleasures of trash world for the riches of rebuilding a new world.

[15:50] It will require a willing embrace of suffering. It will require a willing embrace of suffering. Not just the pain of childbearing, but the pain and difficulty and the struggle and toil of child rearing.

And a willingness to bear the relative poverty designed to discourage family formation. Every woman in your lineage, born before your great-grandmother, brought children into the world under tremendous pain and at significant risk to her life.

Every time she got pregnant, she knew there were substantial odds that bearing this child would claim her life. If she survived each pregnancy, her baby had 25% chance of not living to say his first word and a 50% chance of not living into adulthood.

Life in the pre-modern world was dangerous. Death was always in the foreground. And not hidden away as it is today.

Only when the perceived threat of a deadly pandemic did our society briefly remember that death stalks us all. And look at the chaos that resulted in that.

[17:11] But now, despite it never being easier and safer to deliver a child and raise him into adulthood, motherhood has never been more despised. Their female ancestors risked their lives to bear children.

They knew they would likely weep and mourn over. And the women of trash world fear a child might cut into brunch time. Our duty in this idolatrous age is to raise courageous women like those we are descended from.

Women who understand they have been uniquely blessed with a call to a special sort of warfare. The battle she fights is through much pain, toil, and grief.

And it is all for her glory, which is to bring future generations into the world. Trash world seeks to entice your daughters to desire anything but that.

Okay, so we've been challenged. We're committed to doing what we can.

[18:19] But from there, we really need to see that we've got to also be okay just doing what we can. What we see in our story with Moses' mother is a woman with extremely limited options, but an extremely unlimited God.

Friends, this is how to live the most fulfilling life available to a human being. Live an adventurous life with fewer resources than you need to do the thing and see God step in for you.

You want to have a great life? That's how you live a great life. Do a hard thing without the resources you need and watch God intervene. Now look back at verse 1.

Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. And she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river of the bank.

[19:32] And this is the title. She did what she could do with what she had. That's what is motherhood. You do what you can do. You do with what you can do with what you have.

And you watch God multiply your little loaves and fishes into creating an eternal being that loves him and that makes a difference in the world.

That's what motherhood is. You do what you can with what you have. And if you won't accept that as the basic vision, you're likely to never do anything.

Because you'll be waiting for enough resources to do it. Or you'll always be frustrated. Or, this one's the one that I think is the most concerning.

You'll start to act like God. Control much? The greatest threat to faithfulness or to fruitfulness is that season.

[20 : 38] Now, this is men and women. When we try to take over for God. The truth is, is that we, in all of the missions God has called us to, have a very small part to play.

But if you begin to think it all depends on you, that's when things don't go so well. Moses' mother basically had no choice but to do the little thing she could do.

And leave everything else up to God. The illusion was stripped away from her in a way that it isn't for us. Why were the Hebrews so much more faithful?

I think it was easier in some respects to just know the basic structure of the game. The illusion of control. The illusion of options. It's all just taken off the table.

Just had to deal with the raw, rugged facts. You are not God. Life is hard. Your move. What are you going to do about that?

[21 : 46] She didn't try to hold on to him any longer than was actually possible. That's a whole other sermon. She didn't say, since I can't provide perfect security for this child, I should not have a child.

She just did what she could do with what she had. And her efforts are just a tiny little piece of what was required to raise Moses. And that was okay.

Because the Lord would be faithful with the rest of it. Moms, you're at your worst when you forget this. You're at your worst when you beat yourself up for not being God.

And just so we're clear, and you guys let me, you know, ladies, you let me say these things to you. Like, you're not the victim in that moment. You're trying to be God.

You can say it in a whiny way if you want, but you're just wrong. Stop trying to be God. Philip Graham Reichen, the commentary author of the Exodus commentary that I'm using mostly, he says it this way.

[22 : 56] Children do not flourish unless they are raised by faith and not by fear. So once again, Moses' situation is an extreme one. You are probably not going to have to let go of your kiddo when they're three months old.

But you will have to let go eventually. And not just at 18. Like, regularly. Regularly, you'll have to let go.

Because you actually don't have enough resources to take care of everything. I took all this time to introduce the Malthusian thing because I want you to know, like, you are actually being propagandized.

But I also want you to, I wanted to kind of trick you into being, you know, angry with Malthus. So that you would say, that's zero-sum thinking thing. No, no, no, no, no, no.

I don't want that. Thank you. I don't want that for Malthus. I don't want that for me. I don't want to live a life full of anxiety and doom and gloom over the resources that I can't see coming.

[24 : 04] I'm going to trust there's a God who put all of this here and that he is more than able to meet all of my needs in Christ Jesus.

Now, you might understand that. You might not. But the key to getting it and getting it and getting it and getting it is to just stop and remember who God is.

Stop and remember who God is. It cures both issues. It cures your ignorance of God and it cures these moments where we all fall into where we think we have to be God. The basic question is this.

Do you believe that there is a God who exists at the end of your efforts? In Mark chapter 4, Jesus says this.

The kingdom of heaven is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day. The seed sprouts and grows.

[25 : 06] He knows not how. That's life, friends. I do my little thing. I sleep. I rise. The little thing becomes something I know not how.

We play a part, but so much is left up to God. God proved himself faithful in this text. Look at verse 4.

And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. 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.

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. And then his sister, who was standing nearby, his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?

And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, go. So the girl went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.

[26 : 19] So the woman took the child and nursed him. And when the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she named him Moses, because she said, I drew him out of the water.

So look at all the Lord did at the end of this mother's efforts. So I want to just tell you three things that I think maybe would be helpful to remember.

First one is, is that the river is evocative of the wilderness. This is this in-between period I talked about two weeks ago when we discussed the Exodus patterns. The river is the wilderness.

And one of the things I wish I had said two weeks ago is that, you know, the wilderness isn't wild to God. The wilderness is wild to us. This period, this place where we don't know what's going on, this place that's not cultivated, this place that's not controlled, but it's not wild to God.

You know, I don't know if water drops have names, if God's named all the water drops. But if he did, every single one of the drops of water in the Nile, God knew by name or number.

[27 : 26] Every single little, he put them in the bulrushes, which, you know, you can think of like, you know, willows or something like that along the bank. You know, watch them in the wind, and they're going this way, and they're going that way, and they're kind of moving around.

Every single blade of grass is moving the way God wanted it to move. At his express sovereign command. You know, were there crocodiles swimming around in this river?

If so, they had to report to Yahweh. The wilderness is not wild to God. When you go into these periods of time where you're just not really sure what's going on, you've left one place, you're headed to another place, you're just in this in-between, you don't know what you're about.

Just understand this, the wilderness is not wild to God. The river is not wild to God. Number two, you can trust God with your finances. You can trust God with your finances.

You say, why do I say that? Well, firstly, because it's true. Secondly, because it's an easy thing to worry about. Third, because it's something that you kind of have to put a back seat to, usually, to take care of your kids like you want to.

[28 : 36] But I get that from the text. First, Pharaoh's mother says, take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages. What? God just put money into Moses' mother's pocket to do the things she really wanted to do?

Guys, it'll be okay. God exists at the end of your efforts. You'll be all right. He will take care of you. My God shall supply all of your needs according to his riches in glory. And the last thing is, you can trust God with your child's future.

And he'll do something more with it than you think you ever thought was possible. Pharaoh's daughter says, I'm going to name the child Moses, because she thought in Hebrew that that meant drawn out of water.

But her Hebrew was a little bit rusty. One commentator says, her Hebrew needed a little work, however, because Moses literally means he who draws out of. Unwittingly, Pharaoh's daughter gave the child a name that hinted at his destiny.

[29 : 45] Just as Moses himself was drawn out of the water, he would later draw God's people out of Egypt. Look at all God's doing at the end of her efforts.

And I'm telling you, friends, you want to live a life just confined to your own resources? It's not going to be half as interesting as a life that goes to the end of what you can do and then sees God.

Take your little seeds and cause them to bloom and bear much fruit. Let's just close with a couple points of application. The first one is simply this. Both men and women were created for courage.

You want to see a person come alive, man or woman, call them to courage. And that's what I'm doing to you, ladies, calling you to courage, to look the wilderness in the eye and say, my God is already there.

My God is already there and he will sustain me and he will take care of me in the chaos. Likewise, both men and women were created in their own way for combat. Even in Eden, God gave them an enemy to resist and defeat.

[30 : 52] Friends, making and raising children into fear and admonition of the Lord is one of the most subversive things you can do in this current day.

You like to be ornery? I know some of you do. You like to fight? I know a few of you have told me you like to fight. This is how you fight. And this is where I want to explain the second part of my title, Boniface Babymaking.

Let me just tell you real quickly about this man named Boniface. At the height of Rome's imperial glory, they had pretty much taken over everything. They couldn't take over the Germans. Caesar had sent in. This is actually happening when Jesus is around 12 years old. So while Jesus is in the temple sitting at the feet of the teachers and interacting with them, Caesar is sending 20,000 troops into Germania.

You know how many Romans were left after that battle? Zero. Zero. The Germans destroyed 20,000 troops in that single battle. And this had been going on for a long time.

[31 : 58] Rome kept trying to take Germania, frequently unsuccessful. In fact, they never succeeded. These people were thought to be unconquerable. And in fact, later on, as you probably know, they were the ones that would sack Rome.

Now, this unconquerable people met a man named Boniface. Boniface was a Christian. This is around 700 AD. And the Pope, Pope Gregory II, had told him, I want you to leave your comfortable pastorate and I want you to move to Germania and deal with these savages. And so, leave he did. Now, at some point, Boniface realized that the way to deal with these people was to confront their idols. And they had one idol in particular, a big oak tree called the Thor tree. And it was believed, and now we offer sacrifices and let the blood of the sacrifices feed this tree. And it was believed that if anyone were to ever touch this tree, let alone attempt to destroy it, they would be immediately killed.

[33 : 06] So what does Boniface do? Boniface says, on such and such a day, we're going to pull an Elijah and I want you all to meet me at the tree.

And the story records that he took an axe and he took one swing at this mighty oak tree. I don't know if you've ever tried to cut oak, but one swing isn't going to do much to it.

But at the end of that swing, after that swing was over, a mighty wind blew through and knocked the tree over. Immediately. Now this was actually the beginning of the end of the German pagan worship.

Many Germans on that day repented and trusted in Christ and many more would in following years. Converts continued to flow in. Pagan shrines from all over Germania were sacked and replaced with churches.

There's one church, one legend that says that Boniface actually turned Thor's oak into a pulpit. So that every week the people gathered would have to acknowledge what the God of the universe did to their little idol.

[34 : 21] My friends, I want you to understand, and there's no exaggeration, making kids and raising them in the fear and admonition of the Lord is a central way in this day and age to chop down the idols of this culture and your own.

Chopping at the idols of control, the idols of zero-sum thinking, the idols of free time, the idols of self.

But I also want you to see that as that story of Boniface carries forward into our life, he took his swing, praise God, it wasn't his swing that did the work.

Boniface got to see again, as I've been talking about, the glorious idea of experiencing God at the end of your own efforts. He took a swing, he took just enough of a swing to get himself into trouble if God didn't step up.

There's another definition of parenting for you. And God did step up. Now the second point of application we'll conclude here is this.

[35 : 32] We see in the story that Moses, you know, she couldn't, Moses' mother, she couldn't do everything. What could she do? She could put her child in something to protect him.

And the text kind of uses the word ark and Noah's ark in the exact same sense that it's used earlier in Genesis. So what could she do? She could build this little ark and put her three-month-old baby into it.

It's like, what does that do for us as parents? What should we take away from that? What's really commonly understood that all of the ark language in the Old Testament is just a reference to Jesus in whom we take refuge.

That's how we carry those stories over into the New Testament. So mom and dad, you can't do everything. What's the one thing you should do? Just wrap your kids in the word. Wrap your kids in the gospel. If you just do that over and over and over again and live out the gospel yourself, what you'll find is that that effort, that one effort, will grow and produce much good for a very long time.

[36 : 42] Make sure they know that while the world is a rough place, that all those who place their faith in Christ are safe. You know, moms, there are so many people in church history who credit their moms for the difference they made in their own walk with the Lord.

Augustine, Hudson Taylor, John Newton, Charles Spurgeon, and I'll just leave you with this quote from Charles Spurgeon before we take communion. I am sure that in my early youth, no teaching ever made such an impression upon my mind as the instruction of my mother. Neither can I conceive to any child there can be one who will not, who will have such influence over the heart as the mother who has so tenderly cared for her offspring. you're not enough, but God loves that about you. It is God's glory to take what isn't enough and make it more than enough.

We see today as we celebrate communion that God has given us his own son. And if he's given us his own son, then how will he not also freely give us all things.

[38 : 02] So I want to encourage you today to come and partake of this table. If you're a follower of Jesus, come and partake of this table and celebrate this actual reality that we all live in. We can choose to live in, walk in.

At the end of my efforts, there is the faithfulness of God and he will never leave us or forsake us. Let me pray. Lord God, we are so grateful that among many reasons for your word, you remind us we're not God and you remind us that you are.

Lord, we are so thankful for the mothers in this room today. I genuinely love and respect them. I'm so thankful, God, for them. A huge reason for the sweetness and goodness and truth in our church are many moms and women in this church.

I genuinely pray, God, you would bless them, fill their hearts with faith to live an adventure with you. Fill their hearts with faith to fight the fight as you've called them to fight.

And now, as we partake of this table, we pray you impart faith to us, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.