

What God Does Is Certainly Best, Probably.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Rock and our redeemer, Jesus Christ, amen.

This is such an epic story with so many divergent themes, it was extremely difficult to narrow down what God wanted me to talk about this morning. Just a few of the possibilities are the evils of slavery, the courage of those midwives, or the providence of God's loving protection over Moses. I even considered basing this sermon on the ironic humor of God who placed his future servant, Moses into the house of Pharaoh. Then there's the obvious choice of the call of Moses from the burning bush. Any of those could have been a great topic for today, but the theme that actually reached out and grabbed me was the string that runs throughout all of scripture, not just these three chapters of Exodus. The theme that connects every book of the Bible and all the years between people and times of the Old Testament and us today is trust. Remember to think of trust, faith, and belief all as the same thing. Here's how they are present and help shape the story. Picture the scene, the children of Israel have become so numerous in Egypt they have become a threat to the king. All this just 350 years after Joseph, all of his brothers, and their entire generation have gone to sleep with their fathers. They had been the special invited guests of the king of Egypt and had really prospered over all those years. That was then, this was now... They were so large a voting block they endangered the ruling class and became a threat to the oppressive rulers. So, the

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King orders the Israelites to submit to extremely harsh working and living conditions. They could have lost the faith Joseph had in God and wallowed in self-pity, but they cried out to God instead. They might have been angry with God for allowing such a situation, or they might have been even more angry with their task masters and with Pharaoh himself, so they cried out to God for liberation. I don't know what they prayed for, but I do know God almighty, sitting on His throne in heaven heard the cries of their affliction. They might not have even known they were praying when they literally cried out from the lash of the whip. All they knew was they were hurting and needed their God to intervene. They cried and God heard. God felt their pain... They cried and God acted... This is the only God you can count on to be faithful because this God is the only God that is ALIVE! There's an old Jewish proverb that goes like this, (SLIDE) "What the Lord does is certainly best... .. probably." Did you notice the confidence in the first part of that sentence? What the Lord does is certainly best... If we could only stop there. At that point we would have perfect or near perfect faith. We would be able to say to that mountain, "Be moved to the sea!" And it would be so...

Sadly, we can never seem to stop there... We add that conditional, statistical, weasel word, "Probably..." I mean when have any of us been really satisfied with the blessings God has given us? We all want a little more. The Children of Israel had that same trouble. God had heard their prayers and has

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determined to deliver them from their bondage and free them to Worship God on His Holy Mountain. (SLIDE) Wait, wow, we have a God who is alive?!?! We have a God who can hear us when we pray?!?! We have a God who created everything and has promised to make many nations come from us... We have a God who is almighty and can do all of that, but all he gave us was this, this man, called Moses... Hey, God, he stutters... and he killed a man, an Egyptian! Sure, he led us out of Egypt, but where's his Big Picture game plan. Now he's going to starve us out here in the wilderness? Oops, they lost their faith and instead of thanking God for the gift of freedom, they failed to recognize that what God does is certainly best and instead they chose to live in the world of "Probably." There were some really great examples of faithful people who at least in some certain circumstances have been able to demonstrate the level of trust and faith in God to deliver on His promises. These heroes stay in the world of "What the Lord Does is Certainly Best," and never slip into the world of "Probably." Some people have seemingly unflappable faith in God for everything to turn out for the best no matter what today brings. Eternal optimists... (SLIDE) In this epic story we heard today I think of not just the faith, but also of the courage of those midwives. Given a direct order from the king himself to slaughter the male babies, they defied the king. Instead of finding their heads going one way and the rest of them going in the opposite direction, the Bible says God rewarded them and their families grew.

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Standing up to powerful people is not an easy thing to do. Martin Luther did it by nailing his 95 debating points to the door of the Wittenberg Church on October 31st, 1517. He was excommunicated for his trouble... (SLIDE) As an inspector on the Air Force Materiel Command's Office of the Inspector General, I had to stand my ground when a unit was not following the regulations or accomplishing their portion of the mission according to Air Force procedures. On the other hand, if a unit finds a quicker more efficient process that accomplishes the same outcome, then that individual or entire unit might be rewarded as "Best Seen To Date." Today, I'm giving the Best Seen to Date award to those Midwives who showed their faith by trusting God to protect them. I'd give a failing grade to Pharaoh for complete failure of even believing in God and for a complete lack of justice and compassion for his people.

In our reading for today, not only is God working to save this baby Moses, but God does it with irony thicker than a Dairy Queen Blizzard (SLIDE). I mean only God could arrange it, so Moses is rescued by none other than Pharaoh's daughter, who then needs someone, who had recently given birth, to nurse the baby. Of course, the midwife picks Moses's actual birth mother to raise and nurse him. Then he goes to live with Pharaoh, in his house, under his roof, and learning all ways of Egyptian culture and the inner workings of both religious and governmental structures. I'm certain he was also told the miraculous series of

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events that led to him becoming a prince of Egypt. I mean even his name tells his story. In Hebrew Moses means “Drawn from the Water.” Our epic reading for this morning left out the part where Moses moved from the world of What God Does is Certainly Best, to the world of Probably. When he became aware of the maltreatment of his people and was a firsthand witness to a Hebrew slave being severely beaten, Moses stepped in. He lost his trust in God and decided, right then and there, he was going to take matters into his own hands. That’s how he ended up in Horeb (SLIDE) tending the flock of his Father-in-Law, Jethro. He ran away from his world and his troubles. The thing is, you can never run fast enough or far enough to be where God can’t find you. Moses was 80 years young when he turned to look at that burning bush.

I hope you can see from these few examples how the people of Israel and their leader, Moses both lived in the “What God does is Certainly Best,” mind set until their trust failed and they slipped into the shaky land of “Probably...” Remember our ancient Jewish proverb, “What the Lord does is certainly best, probably...” In your life, can you identify times when you trusted God with all you had in you? How about those times when you thought you were trusting God, but somehow your strong faith slipped and the doubting, the weaseling, the “Probably” sneaks into your thoughts. Pretty soon you’re taking things into your own hands and messing up God’s plan that most certainly is true and best. I know

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I've had more times like that than I can count! I worry way too much about the future. I worry about me and PJ. I worry about the state of our world. The faith I do have is so small, but the promise of God is so huge and so true, and so certain... Probably...

May the Lord bless you with the faith to move mountains and the wisdom to know where to put them... May your trust in the promises of God never waiver, but when it does, thanks be to God for the gift of Jesus Christ who saves us from those times when the uncertainty of "Probably" takes over our hearts and minds. When that happens, we pray the Lord will love us back into his family as the father welcomes the prodigal son... Thanks and praise be to God now and forever for his faithfulness and for hearing his people when we cry out in our times of suffering and in our times of faithful courage, amen.