

Sermon Text for February 3, 2019

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Exodus 2:1-10, Acts 7:17-22

“Look what I found”

Welcome to Super Bowl Sunday, a Sunday where we find ourselves immersed in a culture that is completely caught up with an event that has everyone’s attention. From the commercials to the half time show to the snacks and drinks and the preparation that takes place beforehand. Did I leave anything out? Oh, yeah, the game, the game with once again the New England Patriots playing in it. But one of the things that keeps Stacy’s interest, who is not a huge sports fan, are the personal stories of players and how they got to where they are today.

CJ Anderson is a running back for the LA Rams, he never knew his father, he was unemployed and working with his foundation that helps youth in the inner cities partnering with tech companies when the Rams called him less than two months ago to help them out. He speaks about being at the right place at the right time and crediting God for putting him in a position where he can play the game. Stacy likes him because in an interview he said his goal in life is to give everything to his kids that he never had growing up without a father. He wants to be that father to his kids that they never had.

So unlike me who really dislikes the Patriots, Stacy wants the rams to win because of a story of one of its players who was able to attribute the hand of God as bringing him to where he is today, getting ready to play in the Super Bowl.

Our Scripture for today is the story of the infancy of Moses who was found and some would say by chance, boy wasn’t that lucky, but as good Presbyterians we believe that nothing happens by chance and that it could very well have been God who placed CJ Anderson where he was for the Rams to find him as he placed Moses in such a place that Pharoah’s daughter would find him.

In Acts, Stephen goes over the Moses story with his accusers and reminds them and also reminds us for those of us who are listening that God actually wants us to succeed. God gives us opportunity after opportunity to make the right decisions and the right choices. Even when we fail, God does not give up on us and we are commanded to keep looking for the opportunities that God provides us that are all around us.

The stories of Moses and Stephen are stories of unlikely events, some would say lucky events, but we know better because they have God’s name written all over it. Let’s

learn today to keep our eyes open to those moments and opportunities that God gives us for second chances and ultimately through Jesus Christ, salvation.

READ SCRIPTURE

If you have ever questioned the fact that God can use you to change your environment for the better you have to look at Stephen. We are in the middle of the longest sermon in the entire NT. It is over 5% of the book of Acts. Stephen, remember him, he was a waiter as we see in chapter 2 and now here he is proclaiming God's power and glory. You know why he was able to do this? Well, because he was full of it. That's right, look at the verses that describe Stephen here in Acts.

In Acts 6:3 when the disciples were looking to begin a deacon ministry what were they looking for? "Choose among you men who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. Then in verse 5 he is described as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. Then in verse 8 he is called a man full of God's grace and power. At the end of these verses when he sees Jesus' vision it states in 7:55, but Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit...

Well today he brings us to Moses after having gone through Abraham, Joseph, and now Moses. He lays out the story more or less along the lines of the OT. The only difference is that he does not even mention the women, except for Pharaoh's daughter, who play the absolutely key roles in the story. Acts has him brought up in his father's house and it was his ancestors, the males, who were forced to abandon their children.

In Exodus we find some of the blanks filled in about Moses. We see that Moses was born a PK, which means he was a pastor's kid, so already as we know he was born to be a rebel. Listen to the reading that really stresses the role that the women played in making sure that Moses is protected. The commandment that was handed down from Pharaoh is seen in the previous chapter. Every boy was to be thrown into the Nile.

His mom followed the law to the letter. She made an intricate very seaworthy basket and laid Moses, it says here, in the reeds. As an aside, the river, by the way, is not a little stream that trickles up from south to north known as the Nile. The Nile is a beast of a river. Think of the Susquehanna and placing a baby in a basket on that river. But in this Scripture we see everything is done carefully. It is very specific. Nothing is left up to chance or to luck. There is no flowing river here that somehow miraculously leads to the Pharaoh's daughter. No, they had done a lot of ground work before the big day. They had scoped out the sight and they knew that Pharaoh's daughter came there to bathe. And sure enough she came down with her entourage and: "Look what I found!

How cute, how lucky could I be?" She had no idea all the work that Moses' mother and his sister Miriam had done to make sure that she would find that baby.

It is almost impossible for us to see God at work behind the scenes in our lives. There he is sweating away, putting everything in place, holding his breathe as we get close to the opportunities that he lays out before us in our lives and then breathe a sigh of relief as we take those opportunities, or sighing in sadness as we pass them by as we are so focused on our own lives. It is so easy for us to completely miss how God has set up situations in our lives so that we would almost have to stumble across the opportunities and the blessings he puts before us.

Pharaoh's daughter with Miriam's help then hires Moses' very mom to breast feed him and to help raise him. How lucky was that? Not at all, we have to be able to have the eyes of faith and see that God's hand in the Moses story is just as present as God's hand in our lives. We need to be more like Miriam and be the one who takes the opportunities that God gives us, sees the opportunities and goes forward even risking it all at times, but confident because we know that God is strong.

But more often than not we are like Pharaoh's daughter who could have potentially seen it as lucky not even knowing that the woman she hired was actually the baby's mother. Can you see that scene of Miriam racing home, mom, mom, I've got a job for you. You won't believe it how God has worked a miracle in our lives.

Stephen begins his story of Moses by reminding us that God has made promises to us and so fills our lives with opportunities and possibilities to pursue those promises. The promise that God made to Abraham, and it was carried out in Moses, and in Joseph, and today in the church is that I will not leave you or forsake you.

Let me tell you about something that happened 2,000 years ago, a baby boy was born and it was God's way of showing us that he was serious about his promises that he made to Abraham and to all of God's people. He fulfilled the promises that he made to Abraham in that boy. In Jesus Christ we see God at work by giving us the ultimate chance to redemption, by giving us the ultimate second chance in case we really have messed up time after time after time. We see God putting the ultimate opportunity in Christ in order to overcome our sin, our desperation, our hopelessness, our insecurity, our loneliness.

In Christ, God gave us the ultimate opportunity to succeed. By recognizing our sin, by recognizing that we haven't had our eyes open to God's love and presence in our

lives because we have been so focused on ourselves and at times our survival, at other times just the business of our lives, then this opportunity of new life, a life of freedom in Christ has passed us by. A friend of mine who is a pastor in Atlanta was walking to a restaurant with his wife one evening when right in front of him a man began to have a cardiac arrest. He became delirious and all he could do was shout out, forgive me Kevin, forgive me Kevin. My friend tried to calm him down and said I'm not Kevin, I'm a pastor and help is on the way. The man continued and it turns out that Kevin was his son with whom he had been estranged for a variety of different reasons. But it never sat well and he wanted to reconcile but did not have the courage to admit that he was wrong to his son. So he continued. My friend after a while knew exactly what he had to do, Dad, he said, I forgive you. And when he said that the man relaxed and died in his arms.

We all want to have a second chance at things that we mess up and opportunities that we have missed, at decisions that were tragic for us and our families. We don't always get them. But when they do appear, when God puts them in our lives and he is constantly at work doing just that, take advantage of it, and then attribute it to God who is working behind the scenes, not to just dumb luck.

But nothing happens by chance. Moses wasn't found by chance. You aren't sitting here in this church today by chance. God has a purpose and behind his every purpose and action there is meaning. You know it took Moses a long time to figure out why he had been drawn out of the waters, out of a hopeless situation into one of not only hope but extraordinary promise.

Even then he ran from God, said he wasn't sure and couldn't God find someone else. But God wants us to succeed not by chance but by His design. When we fail to meet him up on those opportunities we do disappoint him, but he doesn't give up. He sends another Pharaoh's daughter our way hoping that this time our eyes will be open and that when we are lifted up out of the mess that we are in, we will stay on his path.

Come to Jesus to be drawn out once again. But this time look for the opportunities that he sends us to fulfill his promises that he makes for us so that he will not leave us or forsake us. We are winners not by sheer dumb luck, but by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Amen.