Last week, we were studying about the Canaanite woman who came to Jesus pleading for his mercy of healing upon her demon possessed daughter. Through her extraordinary faith and courage, she not only raised awareness of the system of injustice in our society but she also challenged head-on the many barriers such as **cultures, gender, faith**, and **tradition**. More importantly, through this Canaanite woman, God unveiled a new perspective of what God’s kingdom may look like. Salvation is no longer exclusively reserved for those who consider themselves as privileged but instead, it is based upon one’s personal faith and conviction.

Our passage today keeps our us focused on the widespread systems of injustice and oppression all around. But this time we turned our clock back nearly 1,700 years before Jesus’s time, when the Hebrews were living in exile under the oppressive regime of the Egyptian Pharaoh. You may ask, how did the Hebrews end up living in Egypt? Well, this dated back more than 300 years earlier when Joseph was sold by his brothers into Egypt, remember that story? Joseph became a trusted inner-circle advisor to the Pharaoh because he was able to interpret Pharaoh’s dream ahead of the 7 years of famine. And when the famine did come, Joseph sent words to bring his entire family into Egypt (including the brothers who had try to killed him). He reconciled with them and they settled in the land of Egypt ever since.

Over the span of those three centuries, as you would imagine, the Hebrews population grew exponentially. The new Pharaoh had long forgotten about Joseph and his legacy. He became more and more concerned about the Hebrews who were living among them. He saw them as a potential threat one day, that these foreigners would soon take over the land of Egypt. This was all about claiming superiority and power over others.The Pharaoh pledged to do everything within his power in order to keep it that way through enslavement and even genocide. In the Pharaoh’s mind, the Hebrews were the “dogs” who are to scavenge and compete for the crumbs that were tossed at the Master’s table. Quite a contrast from what we read about last week.

So the Pharaoh came up with a plan to control the population of the Hebrews. He sent a decree to the Hebrew midwives that they were to kill all the Hebrew male babies at the moment of their birth. Sounded like a pretty good plan, right? Well, not so fast. God had other ideas.

Once again, God proved that His plan was much bigger than our human plans…even if it’s from the Pharaoh. **The good shall prevail over the evil of this world.** God mobilized the Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah to defy the Pharaoh’s order of genocide against the Hebrew babies. By doing so, these Hebrew midwives took on a huge risk of their own lives in order to save others. They did what they felt was the right thing to do, because of their ultimate alliance and fear rest in God….and not Pharaoh. These women’s defiance to Pharaoh’s order kept the Hebrew babies alive and preserved the life and the legacy upon God’s covenant people.

 Well, it seemed that these Hebrew midwives had out-witted Pharaoh through their defiance and rebellion. Pharaoh’s plan had been backfired, as the population of the Hebrews continued to grow. So Pharaoh decided to go to plan B, that is to simply kill ALL the newborn boys and have them thrown into the Nile. This only goes to show how cruel, vicious, and obsessed Pharaoh was in annihilating the Hebrew race altogether.

It was under these extraordinary evil circumstances that a baby named Moses was born. If it wasn’t for the defiance and rebellions of the Hebrew midwives, Moses certainly would not have lived. God had a plan set aside for Moses since the day of his birth from his mother’s womb AND on the day when he was drawn out of the water and rescued by the Egyptian princess. God enabled this special child to live in order that he may accomplish greater mission of saving more in the future.

Time after time Moses tried to shake off God by rejecting him and running away, as he wrestled with his own identity crisis of being born of Hebrew slaves, but raise in the Pharaoh’s household as an Egyptian prince. Moses was destined to be the liberator and leader among his own people…the Hebrew people. But through the encounter of the burning bush, God summoned Moses back to Egypt to confront Pharaoh face-to-face, in order to set his people free from the house of oppression and bondage.

God gave Moses many gifts, as well as challenges. God gave him the gift of **leadership** but he also had to deal with his issue with **speech impediment, short temper, and irrational judgement** that led him to commit a murder of an Egyptian soldier. Moses’ life wasn’t perfect. Moses knew that, and God knew that. Nevertheless, God still chose Moses and pledged to work alongside with him in spite of his weaknesses and shortcomings.

What about us? How often do we find ourselves like Moses in an act of defiance when God calls? We try to run away and pretend we don’t hear God, when God is knocking at the door of our hearts? We suppress God’s voice and turn away from plans of which God may have installed for us. We put on this inferior complex thinking that we would never be good enough when God invites us to dream BIG.

But there was more than Moses in our story, what about the two Hebrew midwives Siphrah and Puah. Without them, there would not be a Moses to talk about. Those two rebellious Hebrew midwives responded to God’s calling by doing what was the right thing to do, in accordance to God’s will and not ours, even if it means going against the popular opinion or the power of authority. Imagine what would’ve happened if they had simply gone along with Pharaoh’s order of genocide of the Hebrew babies?

Meet 29 year-old German citizen Irena Sendler, who was living in the German occupied Warsaw ghetto in Poland during WWII. Educated and trained as a nurse and a social worker, Irena took part of a grassroot underground movement challenging the mighty fascist Nazi regime. She smuggled Jewish children out of the German occupied territories and transporting them safely across the border elsewhere. This was quite a daunting and risking operation, not only for the children but also for theses smugglers themselves as well. But that fear of the Nazis never discouraged Irena and her colleagues from doing what was the right thing to do.

Motivated by her Christian faith, Irena was on a mission to save as many Jewish children as she could…one child at a time. Over the years, Irena and her friends managed to rescue over 2,500 Jewish children out of the Nazi occupied Warsaw and into places where they would be safe. She changed the names of these Jewish children, dressed them more German rather than Jewish, taught them many German Christian songs and prayers, so in case they got caught by the Nazis, they would be able to recite them. She falsified birth documents in order to conceal the children’s true identity. Irena disguised herself by serving as a plumber while transporting the children out of the area one at a time, by hiding them in her tool boxes and in her vehicle. This underground smuggling operation went on for years until one day they were discovered by the Nazis. The Nazis arrested Irena for treason and sentenced her to death by firing squad. They broke both of her legs, her arms and tortured her nearly to death. But on the eve of her scheduled execution, she was rescued by her friends after bribing the jail guard. Somehow, she managed to escape out of the Nazi’s hands and went into hiding until the war was over.

Despite sustaining her crippling injuries under the oppressive regime of the Nazis, Irena secretly maintained a record of the names of all the children and their parents whom she smuggled out and kept them in a glass jar. She buried it under a tree in her back yard, hoping that one day these children would be reunited with their parents.

When the war was finally over, she returned to Germany trying to locate some of those children’s parents who might have survived the Nazi, so they can reunite them with their children. But unfortunately, as you would imagine, most of them had perished under the oppressive hands of the Nazis. Those children who were rescued by Irena were placed into orphanages, foster homes or adopted by other Christian families all across Europe. Some even were adopted overseas into the United States.

In 2008, Irena was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, for her heroic act of self-giving and philanthropy. Even though she was not selected, she was honored and humbled just to be nominated and to have her stories told. Many of the children whom she rescued came to honor her and to pay their tribute to her. Irena died later on that year at the age of 98.

Despite her heroic effort, Irena remained humbled and dedicated to her calling and mission from God. She thanked God for the skills that enabled her to gain access to those children and for the opportunities to make a difference in someone else’s lives, despite the atrocious circumstances that she had to operate under. She summed up her ordeal effort when she wrote, ***"Every child saved with my help is the justification of my existence on this Earth, and not a title to glory."[[1]](#footnote-1)***

A simple act of courage and rebellion by this young German woman, led to a courageous lifelong resistance movement against the powerful and oppressive Nazis regime. Who would’ve thought that she had a chance to challenge the monster of a murderous machine? But she did. Irena’s inspiration ignited a movement that was emulated by others. She did it all in the name of God’s love for ALL people. **What does the Lord require of you?.....but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God?”*[[2]](#footnote-2)***

Resistance to oppression often begins in small actions.[[3]](#footnote-3) As demonstrated through the lives of Irena Sendler and those Hebrew midwives, our lives (as simple or as trivial as we might think) can cause a ripple effect and leave a lasting impact upon the lives of others. We may not systemically end the world of oppression, injustice or racism overnight, but at the very least we could do our parts that could make a difference in the lives of others and alter history like Irena and the two Hebrew midwives.

Irena, the Hebrew midwives, and Moses overlooked their many shortcomings and their long odds against the oppressive and unjust authorities. They followed their hearts and honored their calling and mission, as led by the Holy Spirit.

In the same way, you and I must also take courage by accepting God’s challenges that stood before us today…to be Christ’s disciples by upholding our integrity and exercise Christ’s grace and humility upon others. Put ourselves in the others’ shoes. Try to understand how they feel, especially those who are being oppressed and those whose voices have been long silenced.

As the Apostle Paul challenged the early church and to us today that we shall “not be *conformed to [the pattern of] this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to us that we ought not to think of ourself more highly than we ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.[[4]](#footnote-4)***What might God be calling us to take part of a larger movement today?**

Friends, God has called us to let go of our own fears and insecurities. Let us stand firm in our faith and anchor our trust in our LORD Jesus Christ, who was, is and is to come. The power of the gospel will ultimately set us free and break loose the chain of bondage that once enslaved us. God will rescue us and draw us out of the turbulent waters and give us this new life and new hope of the kingdom to come.

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. [*www.truthorfiction.com/irena-sendler/*](http://www.truthorfiction.com/irena-sendler/)

*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irena\_Sendler* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Micah 3:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Japinga, Lynn Preaching the Women of the Old Testament. P.50* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Romans 12:2-3* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)