

So, here's the thing about Mother's Day.

It's complicated.

Joyful for many, yes, but complicated.

*"It's right there on the calendar, even if your mother has died.*

*Even if you've been told, yet again, that you're still not pregnant;*

*or if you've never been more scared than you are right now because you are pregnant, it's Mother's Day.*

*Even if your own mother's priorities included everything but you, there's still a Google Doodle reminding us that today is Mother's Day.*

*Even if you have scars, ones you can see or ones you can't, it's Mother's Day.*

*That cake mix commercial is going to roll out four times an hour even when you can't stop shaking and crying because you can't believe you slapped your child today.*

*It's Mother's Day.*

*And we all have to live with that, in those silent, breathless moments, because even when the baby [died at birth], it's*

*Mother's Day.*" ("Even In The Most Broken Places, There Is Room For Love,"  
Becky Brooks. UUA.org.)

Here at our church, we try to acknowledge *"how difficult it is to have this day, right alongside how joyful this day can be.*

*Our church doesn't pretend there aren't complicated differences between us.*

*And I hope we are a church that fills the space between our differences with love.*

*Because even in the most broken places, there is room for love.*

*We can be that church."*

Because we can be that church, I chose today's scripture from the book of Exodus in the Hebrew Bible because it shows us maternal love in so many different capacities.

There are 5 women in this story who protect a young infant through their courage and bravery.

You may have heard of this infant, his name was Moses.

These women who protected him were all living in Egypt under the effective dictatorship of Pharaoh.

He operated an oppressive regime.

And he wanted to kill all the Hebrew baby boys because he was threatened by the Hebrew people, also known as Israelites.

The women we hear about defied Pharaoh and refused to cooperate with his evil plan to enact infanticide.

The first women who protected him are two midwives, Shiphrah and Puah.

Pharaoh specifically told the midwives, when they were delivering babies of the Hebrew slave women, that if they delivered a boy, the midwife was instructed to kill him instantly.

The women refused to do this, for obvious reasons.

But Pharaoh got word of their defiance and these women lied to the most powerful man in their nation in order to protect the oppressed people.

They came up with this explanation and told Pharaoh that they can't kill the baby boys because they can't get to the birth in time!

They said that those Hebrew women, they are vigorous and they just pop the baby out, just like that!

They're not like the Egyptian women who are delicate and who labor for hours and hours.

They successfully lied to Pharaoh while stroking his ego at the same time, by insulting the Israelite women and flattering the Egyptian women whom Pharaoh loved so much.

It was manipulative genius.

Now, normally I wouldn't advocate for lying, but lives were on the line, so I think their lies are justified.

The next hero in this story is Moses' mother, we later learn that her name is Yochabed.

She saved her son from death by giving him up and trusting in God's providence.

You see, after Pharaoh's decree to the midwives didn't work, he expanded his evil orders.

He said that anyone who gives birth to a Hebrew boy, that boy shall be thrown into the Nile and drowned, but the girls could live.

The irony here is that the women, whom Pharaoh doesn't seem threatened by, they are the ones who operate through secretive acts to protect the boy who will eventually liberate all the Hebrew people.

So after Moses' was born, knowing his life was at stake, his mother hid him for 3 months.

But when it got to the point in which she could no longer hide him, she put him in a basket and sent him down the Nile, trusting that someone would find him and save him.

Enter the fourth hero, Moses' sister, Miriam.

She knows what her mother is up to and so she stands down river to see just what is going to happen to her brother who floating in a basket.

All these women are paying attention, trying to care for this young infant.

The next woman to enter the scene, while she's never named, she is quite well known.

This is Pharaoh's daughter.

She was going down to the river to bathe and saw a baby crying in a basket in the reeds.

She sent her maids to fetch the basket.

She knew that he was a Hebrew baby and the text says that she took pity on him.

Now, Miriam, Moses' sister who has been observing all this, she enters the scene.

She conveniently says, ‘Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?’” (Exodus 2: 8).

Of course Pharaoh’s daughter agrees, and whom does Miriam fetch to nurse Moses?

His mother, Yochabed!

Not only that, but Pharaoh’s daughter tells Yochabed to nurse him and she will pay her wages for it.

Being paid to nurse her own child, that’s a pretty great outcome, given the circumstances.

Pharaoh’s daughter ended up raising Moses into adulthood, with all the advantages of court life, and then, of course, he liberated his people from the tyranny of Pharaoh.

It’s a fantastic tale of redemption and justice.

But you see, none of this would have been possible without the courageous actions of any of these women.

They risked their lives and their freedoms to protect this child.

While only one of them was his biological mother, they all mothered him in different ways.

Pharaoh’s daughter was his adoptive mother.

His sister looked after him and made sure he didn't drown, and then she reconnected him with his birth mother so that she could nurse him.

And the midwives who helped with the labor and delivery of Moses, they protected him by refusing Pharaoh's orders to kill him.

“There is an old adage, “Because God couldn't be everywhere, God created mothers.”

And those of us who have been loved by the divine gift of a mother know, [that such love] is an extension of God's love.

So, on this day we honor those mothers who so loved their children that they stood up to [this harsh] world to secure places... for their children to overcome negative life circumstances so that they could make positive life choices.”

But we remember that it takes people in all forms, all roles, all strata of society to help raise our children well, not just the mamas.

As important as mothers and fathers are, they cannot, and should not, have to be solely responsible for making sure their children are raised well and treated lovingly.

And so, today, *“We celebrate those modern-day midwives among us, who helped us with the pain of achieving and reaching our goals...*

*We celebrate those maternal sisters like Miriam, when they could not hold us personally their guiding eyes, teachings, prayers, and principles guided us through the reeds of life until we landed safely at the various stages of our life adventures.*

*We celebrate adopted mothers who, like Pharaoh’s daughter, met us at the point of need, whether as teenagers, college students, young adults, professionals, wives, husbands, fathers, and mothers in our own right, and pulled us out of the [water when it seemed to be rising above our heads].”* (Floyd-Thomas, Stacey. Mother’s Day Lectionary Commentary [http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/.](http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/))

I want to tell you about a tribe in Eastern Africa, for they have wisdom that we could learn from.

They’re mostly located in Kenya, and despite education, civilization and western cultural influence, they have clung to their traditional way of life.

This is the Maasai tribe.

The traditional greeting that the Maasai warriors use is, "Kasserian Engeri," translated "And how are the children?"

“This greeting acknowledges the high value that the Maasai place on children's well-being.

Even warriors with no children of their own give the traditional answer, "All the children are well," meaning that peace and safety prevail.

When all the children are well, it means the priorities of protecting the young and the powerless are in place; that the Maasai people have not forgotten their reason for being.

"All the children are well" means life is good."

(“Traci Blackmon: How Are The Children?” [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org).)

When the most vulnerable people in society, the children, are well, that means things on the whole are going well.

It takes parents of all types- biological, foster and adoptive, the people like Yochabed and Moses’ daughter.

It takes grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings like Miriam.

It takes mentors, coaches, teachers, doctors, nurses, midwives, like Siphrah and Puah.

It takes church members, and everyone in between to help care for our children.

One unhealthy or abusive adult in a child’s life is one too many.

We are all needed to help walk with children through their stages of development until they’re adults and can then guide the young ones who come after them.

And so what if we measured the success of our society by asking the question,

“And how are the children?” Amen.

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