

August 27, 2023: Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Main Idea: In spaces of power, God will work through us and our unique gifts to subvert what is harmful and to fight—even if the fight is in secret—to bring about God’s kingdom.

The most powerful people in our Exodus story today should be the king of Egypt and the daughter of Pharaoh. But in actuality, the most powerful people in this text are the people who are serving them.

The king gives an order that everyone is expected to obey—an order to kill all of the baby boys born among the Hebrews. Shiphrah and Puah use their position as midwives to subvert this order—to render it completely ineffective. With a few gut decisions and one fairly flimsy white lie, they use their unique platforms and skill sets to prevent a genocide.

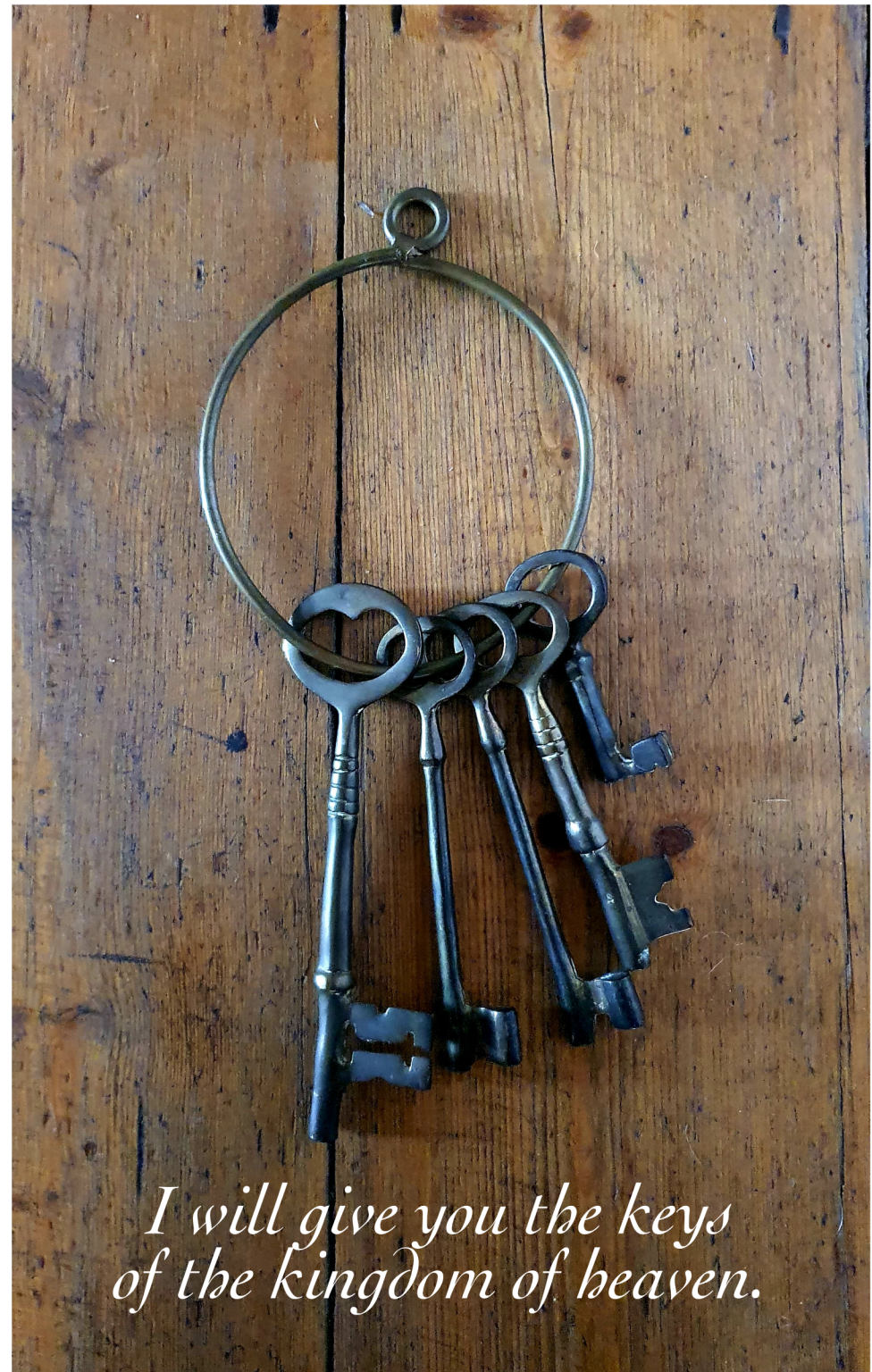
Bithya—a name given to the daughter of Pharaoh in oral tradition—isn’t actually the person who pulls Moses’s basket from the reeds. Her servant does—her servant shows mercy on, and expresses concern for, the baby. Miriam, Moses’s sister, capitalizes on the space this servant has created, boldly using her secret position of a blood relation to Moses to arrange things in such a way that Moses’s biological mother can nurse him as Bithya raises him in the palace.

God’s will was that Moses would grow up to lead Israel out of enslavement and into liberation in the promised land. No amount of earthly power or influence could stop that plan from happening. God worked around would-be obstacles by inviting people into the act of going against the status quo. In our Exodus text, those people are women working jobs in service to others—a double whammy of not-so-privileged. But ironically, they wield more power than anyone in higher classes or ruling seats precisely because of where and how they are positioned in society. God uses their relationships, their talents, their mobility and their specific circumstances to move the needle.

As you think about your everyday life and routine, where are the spaces in which God could use you to fight a subversive fight? Where are the spaces in which God might be using you already? What about you and your particular social location could help advance the building of God’s kingdom and the unfolding of God’s will?

Gospel Summary

Jesus questioned the disciples about who people thought he was. In his question, he indirectly pointed toward himself as the Messiah, toward Peter as the rock on which the church would be built, and toward God.



*I will give you the keys
of the kingdom of heaven.*

August 27, 2023
Thirteenth Sunday
after Pentecost

GOD'S WORD for Today

First Reading: Exodus 1:8-2:10

⁸Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. ¹⁰Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." ¹¹Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. ¹²But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. ¹³The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, ¹⁴and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them. ¹⁵The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶"When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." ¹⁷But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. ¹⁸So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" ¹⁹The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." ²⁰So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. ²¹And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. ²²Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

2 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. ²The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. ³When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. ⁴His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him. ⁵The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. ⁶When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him, "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. ⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to

nurse the child for you?" ⁸Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Psalm: Psalm 124

Second Reading: Romans 12:1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.