

Have you ever said to someone, “well who made you judge over me?” Ever had that said to you? Do you know where that phrase comes from? This phrase comes from a part of the story which we are about to read. Today we continue to read from the book of Exodus. The book of Exodus is the second book of the Bible and is the story of God’s people in transition. Last week we read about how a group of diverse women came together to protect the life of Moses. Today we read stories about Moses that I think give us a clue as to why God felt that Moses was the one to lead the Israelite people through this time of tremendous transition.

Read Exodus 2: 11-25

There is a story told in India about a poor woman who had only one son. She worked hard cleaning houses and grinding grain for the well-to-do families in town. They gave her some grain in return and she lived on it. But she could never afford to buy nice clothes or toys for her son. Once, when she was going to the market with some grain to sell, she asked her son, "What can I get you from the market?" He promptly replied, "A drum! Mother, get me a drum."

The mother knew she would never have enough money to buy a drum for her son. She went to the market, sold the grain, and bought some gram flour and some salt. She felt sad that she was coming home empty-handed. So when she saw a nice piece of wood on the road, she picked it up and brought it home to her son. The son didn't know what to do with it. Yet he carried it with him when he went out to play.

Near their home, an old woman was lighting her woodstove with some cow-dung patties. The fire was not catching and there was smoke all around and it made the old woman's eyes water. The boy stopped and asked why she was crying. She said that she couldn't light her fire and cook. The boy said, "I have a nice piece of wood and you can start your fire with it." The old woman was very pleased, lit the fire, made some bread, and gave a piece to the boy.

He took the bread and walked on till he came upon a potter and her child. The child was crying and flailing his arms. The boy stopped and asked the potter why the child was crying. The potter said the child was hungry and she had nothing in the house to give him. The boy gave the bread in his hand to the hungry child, who ate it eagerly and stopped crying. The potter was grateful to the boy and gave him a pot.

When he walked on, the boy came to the river, where he saw a husband and wife quarreling. The boy stopped and asked the man why he was being so mean to his wife. The man said, "This woman broke the only pot we had. Now I've nothing to boil my clothes in before I wash them." The boy said, "Here, don't quarrel, take this pot and use it." The man was very happy to get a large pot. He gave the boy a coat in return.

The boy walked on. He soon came to a bridge, where he saw a man shivering in the cold without so much as a shirt on him. He asked the man what had happened to his shirt, and the man said, "I was coming to the city on this horse. Robbers attacked me and took everything, even my shirt." The boy said, "Don't worry. You can have this coat." The man took the coat and said, "You're very kind, and I want to give you this horse."

The boy took the horse, and very soon he ran into a wedding party with the musicians, the bridegroom, and his family, but all of them were sitting under a tree with long faces. The boy stopped and asked why they looked so depressed. The bridegroom's father said, "We're all set to go in a wedding procession. But we need a horse for the bridegroom. The man who was supposed to bring it hasn't arrived. The bridegroom can't arrive on foot. It's getting late, and we'll miss the auspicious hour for the wedding."

So the boy offered them his horse, and they were delighted. The bridegroom then told the boy that he wanted to show him how thankful they were for his generosity. The bridegroom then asked the drummer at the wedding to give the boy one of his drums. The drummer gave the boy his drum.

The boy now rushed home to his mother, beating his new drum, and told her how he got it, beginning with a piece of wood from the roadside.

The story we have read from the life of Moses is one which we don't usually tell. It is the story of Moses killing an Egyptian man for beating a Hebrew man. Moses hopes that his act of killing is kept quiet. But then when he comes upon two Hebrews fighting one another, Moses tells them to stop. At which point, one of the Hebrew men says, "and who made you judge over us? Are you going to kill us like you killed the Egyptian earlier?" Moses is scared and runs away.

Moses settles into a new land but he again sees an act of injustice. Moses observes seven women drawing water from the well. But some shepherds come and drive them away, denying them the right to draw water. Rather than accepting the stated policy that women were second class citizens and could be treated as such, Moses comes to their defense. Moses collects the water himself and waters their flock.

A story of a group of young women trying to survive only to be pushed away by a selfish group of more powerful men who care only about satisfying their own desires. It is this act of injustice that catches Moses' eye and rather than ignore this, Moses gets involved and seeks to right the wrong.

David Batson has written a book entitled, "Not for Sale." In this book, Batson describes going to his favorite Indian restaurant in San Francisco. He noticed the young teenage girls that worked in the restaurant as dish washers and waitresses and always assumed that they were part of the family that owned the restaurant.

But then a story appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle newspaper that these young girls were not part of the owner's family. This restaurant was a central figure in the growing slave trade. The slave trade of taking young girls from Asia and forcing them into working in restaurants, fields, and brothels throughout the world and including here in the US.

In Batson's words, "he did not go looking for the slave trade, but the slave trade came to him." So Batson decided to take a year off from his work and explore the world of the modern day human trafficking or slave trade. Batson was a writer so he figured his purpose was to write a book about the human trafficking industry in order to draw attention to what was going on.

In his travels, Batson met a woman in Thailand named Cru Nam. Cru Nam was an artist and everyday on the way to her studio she would notice a group of young kids sleeping along the riverbank in that town. Kids that were about 10 or 11 years old. So Cru Nam decided to take some blank canvases and provide an opportunity for these kids to paint their story.

And as these kids painted these nightmarish stories, Cru Nam discovered that these kids were not from Thailand. They were from places like India, Burma, Cambodia and from as far away as China. These kids then told Cru Nam that they were sold into slavery. Some of them sold by their parents, some were kidnapped, while some of them were told that they could come to Thailand and go to school.

But when they arrived in Thailand, they were taken to karaoke bars where men would do things to them that they would be arrested for back in their own countries. These kids living along banks of the river said they were the lucky ones because they escaped. But their friends were still in the karaoke bars having to face this hell every day.

So Cru Nam decided to go to one of these karaoke bars. When she went in, she saw 2 young kids talking to an older man. She ran in, scooped up the kids, and then ran out. Then she went to another karaoke bar, saw some kids talking to an older man, scooped them up and ran out. When Batson met Cru Nam, she had 27 rescued kids and no plans about what to do next. They were living in a field that had been donated to them. They were living in the field because the karaoke owners had a bounty on Cru Nam's head.

Again, Batson's goal was to just write a book about the slave trade. But in his words, when you take one step in the right direction, you are challenged to take another. Batson promised Cru Nam that he would take the profits from the book and build her a home for these kids. While working on his book, Batson got a call from Cru Nam. When he received the call he was working on chapter 2. She told him that she did not have 27 kids but she now had 53.

Batson goes back to writing and he is more focused than ever. Another 2 months go by and he gets another call from Cru Nam. Cru Nam tells him that it is no longer 53 kids but 88 kids. Batson then realized that this was bigger than just writing a book. He was called to start a movement. And so Batson started an organization called "Not for Sale" that is devoted to offering a place of hope for kids trapped into the evil of modern day human trafficking.

Moses saw injustice around him and he did something about it. What injustice do you see? Is it the evil of human trafficking? Is it the injustice of how someone with something is treating someone who is without? Is it the injustice of certain groups being singled out and blamed for cultural problems? Is it the injustice of someone being bullied at school through intimidation or through picking on the student who has less?

Or do you and I do like most of us do and just ignore things that are wrong? Do we become immune to the injustice in the world just like we become immune to the cobwebs in the corners of our kitchen?

This week I challenge you. Do not bury your head in the sand. Pray for God to open your eyes to something that is wrong and that needs to be corrected. Pray for God to not shut your ears to something that is said that is inappropriate. Pray for God to give you strength and courage to overcome the obstacles, to ignore the naysayers, and to fight against the wrongs.

Be strong. Be courageous. Be faithful to God's calling. AMEN.

-“Not for Sale” from their website at <http://www.notforsalecampaign.org/about/>

-Opening story from the South Asian and found at http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/2003/a_drum_an_indian_folk_tale.html

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