

I was about 9 years old when I learned a significant life lesson—in an arcade--at a skeeball machine. If you're not familiar with skeeball, it's a bit like bowling meets mini-golf meets basketball. There's a ramp and a gutter. At the top of the ramp, there are these concentric circle gates with a small hole for the ball. The smaller the circle gate, the higher the points. At the time, you used to get 9 balls and you needed 180 points to get a ticket that you could redeem for a prize. I wanted the purple plastic bobble head bulldog and I was excited because I had 170 points and one ball left. The biggest gated circle was worth 10 points and I was confident. 170 and 10 makes 180. I knew that no matter what, I was getting at least one ticket—maybe more. How could I not?!

How could I not indeed? By rolling that ball with such force that it hit the side of the 50 point gate and still had so much momentum that it bounced off the 30 point gate and out of the gated area to back to the ramp...and into the gutter.

That was the first time I can remember feeling acute disappointment. The kind you feel in the pit of your stomach and in the closing of your throat as you hold back tears. For a long time, I thought the only lesson was 'don't count your chickens before they hatch'.

As I continued to reflect on the lesson that I learned that day, I believe is more appropriately named, "Don't make assumptions". Truthfully, I find that lesson is applicable to everyday life. Don't make assumptions about yourself or others.

Don't assume that you're too young or too old or not qualified enough, or don't have the authority, or can't make a difference, or that there is no way you can overcome your circumstances. All things are possible with God.

Believe in God, pray, and be open to seeing God's grace. Don't assume that the status quo is okay when it's not okay. Don't assume that you have to make do in unfair and evil circumstances. You may not be Superman, but you can be a super hero to someone. In just a few minutes, I'll help you unleash your latent super powers by giving you 10 examples from this passage.

I'll bet that at some point in your life you ran into Superman. In a comic strip or at the movies, or in a comic book or through a TV show. Help me fill in the blanks. Superman is "**Faster than a (speeding bullet!)** Not only is he "More powerful than a" (locomotive!) But he's "Able to (leap tall buildings at a single bound!)" "Look! Up in the sky!" (It's Superman.) You may not be Superman, the fictional character, but with God's grace, you can be a super hero.

As I read the Bible passage this week, I was struck with the similarities between Moses and Superman. Let's look at Superman. He's a super man, capable of doing things that

everyday humans can't. But he's also Clark Kent, reporter. Someone whose job it is to notice and talk about what is going on in the community around him. He doesn't just observe the news, though, he intervenes in it. He changes it. He transforms circumstances.

Superman wasn't born an American in Smallville, Kansas. He was born on Krypton. Remember? The planet was about to implode and there was no hope of survival. His parents had a rocket that only had room for one, so they put him in it and sent him off to Earth. When the ship landed, he was discovered and adopted by the Kents. If not for his parents finding a way to save him, Superman wouldn't have had a chance. And he wouldn't have been able to help others.

In a similar manner, if not for his mother and sister finding a way to save him, Moses wouldn't have a chance.

Infant Moses was put in a little basket, sealed with pitch, and set into the river. There was no hope for him as the son of a Hebrew family. Yet he floats down the river, is noticed by Pharaoh's daughter and adopted into royalty in Egypt. As an adult, Moses noticed what was going on around him and he transformed circumstances. He became a super man, too, more powerful than a locomotive--he parted the Red Sea to stop the Egyptians from following them in a chase scene...He was fast, too. Long before he wandered through the desert for 40 years, he got the whole nation out of Egypt quickly—in the middle of the night--even before their bread could rise. There weren't a lot of tall buildings to leap, but he did go up a mountain and come down carrying heavy stone tablets. He became a super man and prophet, not only in Christianity, but Judaism, and Islam, too.

And here we are, at the very beginning of his story. What I want to focus on is the new start that Moses got. God doesn't appear explicitly in the passage until several verses in, but I suggest that God is there throughout and even when we don't see God or feel God's presence—especially in hard times when our future looks hopeless, **God is there**—working through others...(maybe even you).

We see God's grace in this story that portrays an evil ruler and all-female cast of heroes. Today, we're living in a time when women still make 30% less than men do for the same job and when strong women are called names, so imagine how incredibly upending it was to have female heroes in Old Testament times. Women, who had no stature, no status, no say...these are the people who are outsmarting their 'very shrewd' leader.

We see God's grace for the foreigners, that is the Hebrews living in Egypt. Last week, I gave you a brief synopsis of the story of Jacob's son Joseph. At that point, he was a hero, second in charge to Pharaoh with golden cups, food to spare, and land to give. Joseph had saved Egypt from a famine and he was rewarded and celebrated. And the Hebrews came to Egypt.

But today our passage starts with, the ominous words, "Now a new king arose over Egypt." We immediately get the sense that things have changed. And then, it's confirmed, "one

who didn't know Joseph". There's no connection and no sense of loyalty to the Hebrews living in Egypt.

Dennis Olson, a professor of Old Testament Theology at Princeton Seminary notes that Pharaoh used a strategy that has often worked for those new in power. "A tempting political strategy for new leaders, whether an Egyptian pharaoh or a Nazi Hitler, involves trying to solidify power by singling out a relatively weak minority or outsider group and calling them an enemy. Fear of others can be a powerful source of unity."

(https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=131)

We see Pharaoh say to his people, "let's deal shrewdly with them" or in the event of war, they might turn against us. There's no reason to believe the people are anything but good, law abiding citizens, but they're immediately oppressed into slave labor which gets harder and harder (probably not the best way to engender loyalty or to win friends and influence people). Then, if commanding the midwives to kill the male infants wasn't terrifying enough, then he enlists **all** of the Egyptians to do his work by throwing Hebrew male infants into the river.

Oh my gosh! This is pretty scary stuff. (The Bible isn't for wimps.) You and I probably have fond memories of making little rafts for Moses in Sunday School, but when I read this passage in preparation for today's sermon, I saw it through the eyes of someone reading it for the first time and I thought 'this is a horror show.' Infanticide. Xenophobia. Oppression.

Until such a time when we can create equitable and just conditions for all people all over the globe (thereby creating heaven on earth), we will likely encounter terrible actions by offensive and so-called 'shrewd leaders' in many areas of our lives. Let's not make assumptions about our own power to change circumstance. You can be a super hero. Here are 10 lessons we can take from today's passage:

1. Even if you don't have authority, you can make a life-saving difference. God's grace is apparent through the women--the midwives and the mother....the ones through whom life is delivered.
2. We have a duty to protect those who cannot care for themselves--the fragile--the innocent--the children. Those who have done nothing to deserve ill treatment.
3. Age doesn't matter. It's the daughters who make all the difference here. Moses' sister reunites him with his family immediately and Pharaoh's daughter later adopts him to give him a royal family.

4. You may have to be temporarily separated from your tribe in order to go home and make a difference. Moses had to be part of Pharaoh's family to learn to speak that language so that eventually he can convince Pharaoh to 'let his people go'.
5. Your birthplace, culture, and ethnicity don't determine your eventual standing or outcome.
6. You can resist the temptation to follow orders that involve evil or wrongdoing. Imagine how difficult it was for the midwives to disobey the order to kill the children. We catch the women in a lie and yet we're shown that they're doing God's work and that it is Pharaoh who is in the wrong.
7. Know that even when things are stacked against you, you can plan for a better outcome. Imagine how hard it was for Moses' mother to put him in a basket in the river, but she must have known when Pharaoh's daughter took a bath and she timed it just right to give him a chance.
8. You can do what's right even if others in your family don't. Pharaoh had it out for the Hebrews, but his daughter adopted a Hebrew baby, bringing him into their home. She must have been a strong woman.
9. God works through people like Moses—and the people who gave Moses a chance to be great. The people who saved him so that he could save others.
10. And that leads me to say that God can work through you, too. The things you do today may have far reaching implications. As a parent, or adoptive parent, sibling, or service-provider, you may be caring for another who will one day change the world. Blessed be and amen.