

**SUNDAY July 13, 2025      “Two Strong Women: Miriam and Abigail”**

**Exodus 2:1-10 Exodus 15:1-13 and 20-21**

**I Samuel 25**

We continue our summer series “At Your Request” by focusing on two faithful women of the Old Testament whom you may or may not have heard their stories for a while or at all! Miriam and Abigail are both faithful to God and lived centuries apart and each still calls us to faithfulness in God for in their stories we can find ourselves as children of God living hundreds of years later.

We are first introduced to Miriam when she is a young girl. She is from a Hebrew family and her mother is Jochebed and father Amram. Jochebed has recently given birth to a baby boy and she fears for her son’s life. The pharaoh of Egypt has passed a law that because the number of Israelites is increasing quickly, all young boys under age 2 are to be killed. Because of this, Jochebed decides to hide her baby.

The baby is put into a basket for safe keeping on the river’s edge. The boy’s older sister, Miriam, is told to watch over the baby. This is when the pharaoh’s daughter comes to bathe at the river, sees the basket and instantly wants to save the infant. It is then that Miriam, courageously speaks to the princess and tells her that she could help care for the baby and that she even knows someone who would nurse him. Of course Miriam knows who to get! Her mother! So soon Miriam, the baby now named Moses, and their mother are now being supported by the princess to care for this baby. It is through Miriam’s courage and bravery in speaking to the princess that her brother’s life is saved. In time, Moses goes to live in the palace until such time he needs to reconnect with his family roots.

Why do we like this story? Because Miriam a young girl saves her little brother from death. It is this baby who grows up to be a great leader of the Hebrew people and enables the people to move out of slavery in Egypt to take ownership of the Promised Land to be prosperous. It is Miriam who does not hesitate when the princess needs to have a woman to nurse the baby and she gets her mother. It is Miriam who watches over Moses as he grows up wiser and older in pharaoh’s palace. And it is Miriam who is recognized as a prophet along with her brothers.

We move ahead in the story of Moses because he leaves the palace in search of his own people. He has been called by God to lead the people out of Egypt to the land promised by God. But there are many hurdles in the way but Moses does not give up because God called him to do this important task. Eventually the pharaoh agrees to let the former slaves leave. As the people leave they make their way out of Egypt only to get to the Red Sea. How were all the

people men, women, children, livestock and possessions to cross? The story is that when Moses lifted up his arms, the waves stopped flowing and built walls on either side of a pathway. All the people got across safely when the Egyptian soldiers with horses and chariots were spotted and making their way to the sea. They started to cross but this is when the water returns and they all drown.

Then enters Miriam and a group of women who take up their tambourines and sing together! They start the celebration that the Egyptians would no longer be a threat to them and so they dance and sing. Miriam is respected by the people and she showcases her leadership and ability to inspire faith and worship. She trusts God and even in difficult situations she believed that Moses would be protected.

But there is one instance described in Numbers 12 where both she and Aaron are jealous of Moses and they criticize him. God spoke through them as well as Moses but when God meets with them all, God questions these siblings about Moses' role in leading the people and how they are to continue to influence the many people to follow Moses. After this discussion, Miriam becomes ill with leprosy. Aaron pleads with Moses for forgiveness for they had criticized him before God. Moses cries out to God for Miriam to be healed. For seven days Miriam is put out of the camp of those travelling to the Promised Land as a means of punishment as well as a time of healing. During these 7 days, the whole camp sits and waits for her to become well again. For Miriam is a prophet, a woman who believed in God, experienced God and worshiped fully.

The story of Abigail is told in I Samuel 25 and involves David who had been anointed by Samuel to be king but at this point had not yet ascended to the throne. We know that David is a shepherd and was in the wilderness near the land owned by Abigail and her husband Nabal. Nabal was very rich and had large flocks of sheep. And it was now sheep shearing time and as is usual that once the task was completed, there would be much to celebrate. David's troops guarded and protected Nabal's herds as they travelled through the region. This was a generous service and David offered this service free of charge. David sent his men to ask Nabal to share some of their provisions. This was a common way of remuneration and David's request would not have required much sacrifice for the wealth Nabal.

But then we learn about Nabal's character: harsh, obstinate, and headstrong and he questioned who is this son of Jesse? I do not know them and why should I take bread, water, and meat prepared for my shearers and give it to people I do not know?

So David's servants returned to their master which garnered much anger. David readied about 400 men to set out to retaliate all of Nabal's family and destroy them. At the same time, one of Nabal's servants goes to his beautiful and clever wife Abigail and tells her what has occurred in that the master insulted the future king David. So what does Abigail do?

She gathers provisions for David's men which includes 200 loaves, 2 skins of wine, five sheep ready dressed, 5 measures of parched grain, 100 clusters of raisins, and 200 fig cakes. She loads them on donkeys and tells her servants to go ahead. She followed and as she came riding her donkey into the ravine, David and his men met her. When Abigail saw David, she got off from the donkey, bowed down before him with her face to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, "Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak to you. Listen to what I have to say. Please pay no attention to that man Nabal- he is like his name-- meaning Fool. And then she states: As surely as the Lord your God lives and as you live, since the Lord has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal. Let this gift be given to the men who follow you.

Then Abigail seeks forgiveness by acknowledging the transgression of her husband and shares her generosity which surpassed the stinginess of Nabal. She seeks forgiveness for what occurred. At the same time Abigail also saves Nabal and her family from being killed.

David hears Abigail, blesses her for what she has done. He accepts her gifts and tells her to go home in peace. Abigail was a loyal wife and a wonderful protector.

Later on, when Abigail arrives at home, Nabal is holding a banquet like a king- he is in high spirits and drunk. So Abigail says nothing to him. The next morning Abigail told him what he had done. Nabal's heart failed him and he became like a stone. About 10 days later, Nabal died.

David heard that Nabal had died so he sent and wooed Abigail to be his wife. Immediately, she got up and rode on a donkey with her five maids with her. She became a wife of David, and mother of a son. Abigail remained with David the rest of her life and as a person of integrity it is not hard to imagine that David sought her advice and counsel as a worthy partner.

Abigail had many good qualities as well as being beautiful. This woman was respected by her servants as they knew she would know what to do in this crisis started by Nabal. No doubt this was not the first time she had to apologize for Nabal's rudeness and acted as peacemaker. She used her tact and wisdom to prevent the death of her family by not hesitating to act. She was a woman of faith even though she was not in a good marriage. She gave the gift of food to David's men not coming from her but from God in answer to prayer. Abigail did not

hesitate in doing what needed to be done. She was concerned about the safety of her home. So she did what needed to be done.

Abigail acted properly and did not hesitate to tell David, the future king that his thirst for revenge was wrong. Yet she was also humble and meek and recognized herself as a servant before the future king. David blessed her for coming to meet him and telling him that his revenge was wrong. And yet at the same time she was generous to David's men in what she brought as a thank offering of kindness.

Abigail's story is not one we often share but her life offers modern people today women and men three definite challenges. Abigail's name means "cause of joy". She was a person known to walk in a room and brighten it up, not only by her outward beauty, but by her joy filled life as a faithful follower and believer of God. She was gifted in being able to calm the angered and irritated people who were ready to kill others because of being insulted. She soothed David's heart and appeased her husband's poor behaviour. Abigail also helped others find greater meaning and purpose in life. She sought forgiveness when circumstances warranted other kinds of actions.

Abigail was a faithful woman and she let her faith in God lead her to what she knew was right. She got the provisions ready without question, had her servants help and delivered them personally. She humbled herself for the sake of the lives of her family and household. David was readying his men to kill and take over Nabal's land and property. But because of Abigail's gift of generosity David resisted and changed his plan. And it is these traits which call us to act in order to bring change in the world.

As we reflect on Abigail's life- remember her humility having to apologize for her husband's actions. Remember her generosity and how she brought the servants loaded down with more than enough food for David's men. And also her resistance to falling into Nabal's plan and standing up for her family. And in all of these she brought change to her world. Yes later on she became one of David's wives and of course the property would go to David as she could not hold this as a woman. Yet she held her position with grace and love.

When we reflect on these two strong women of faith we can learn from them and be challenged by what they did in their lives. As they lived they praised God and did what they could in supporting their people, their families and in doing what is right according to God's teachings.

Miriam was a prophet who from an early age was faithful to her family and to God. Abigail lived faithfully with her husband and prevented much bloodshed by her decisiveness and action. Both women grew in their faith in God and each were able to experience full lives.

How might we respond to their stories? Where in your struggles have you discovered goodness? When Miriam leads the people in praise and thanksgiving it was because she knew that the Israelites would be free. How often do you praise God in songs of thanksgiving? Just think about Abigail's generosity as well as her humility. Has someone shown this to you? How did you respond? How might Miriam and Abigail's lives help you to become closer to God and understand how he calls us all to live?

Let us pray:

God of grace and love, thank you for Miriam and Abigail and their example of strong faith along with their generous spirits and ability to praise you no matter their struggles. We pray O God that in these moments, you would show us how we might draw closer to you as we learn and grow in faithfulness. Amen.