Sermon from
August 16, 2026
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Amy Vigesaa

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Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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This week my family was in Grand Marais. It was a beautiful week on the north shore. As part of our time up there, we always like to look for a place we haven't been and maybe find a secret gem. Well, our son Tait said a friend told him we had to go to the Kadunce River. I said, we've been to Kadunce before. He said, "No Mom, he said we have to walk up the river and if we do we'll find a waterfall." I said, "Okay we'll go to Kadunce." So we went. Our three boys who were with- Finn, Tait, and Krister, went directly to the river while Hans and our daughter Sophie and I looked for a trail. We found one, but the boys decided to stay at the river, walking through water and climbing over rocks. Our trail went alongside, but as we went further, the trail went higher and the river went lower. It was becoming a gorge. Then we heard our boys yell, we found it! So Hans, Sophie and I found a trail that led down to the river. Krister, our 20 year old, told me, "You have to go up and then down and around over there to reach it. Do you want to go?" I said yes and he and Finn led me. Occasionally, Finn would reach out his hand to make sure I didn't lose my footing. Then we got to a point where he said, "Okay. Do you want to walk on the tree or go across on

the rocks? When you get to the end of the tree, you'll be able to see the waterfall. Otherwise the rocks will take you across the river and you can get to the shore and see it really well." I chose the rocks, rather than the balance beam of the fallen tree. My son, Krister, stood in the river and helped me find the right rocks to step on, held my hands to make sure I didn't slip, and got me across safely. And there it was- the beautiful waterfall. Sometimes, we need someone to stand in the river for us.

The Nile became a memorial of pain and grief; a symbol of familial and national loss. The Nile became a mass grave. Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying "You shall throw"- You. Not just his warriors and royal armies, but all his people were commanded to commit murder, to engage in an act of genocide. This meant the people in proximity to a Hebrew family had the order to take their baby boy and throw him in the river like trash. It's hard to fathom obeying such a command. But throughout history and around the world, such things have been done. Similar atrocities have been committed. Fear is the starting point; Fear of a population of people considered a threat, considered less than, considered disposable. We see it still. Myanmar. Gaza. Sudan. Ethiopia. We see it in how detainees are treated. We see it in the black and brown children kept in cages. All of us would like to believe we wouldn't do it- that we would have the courage to resist, even stand against such a decree. I would like to believe I would grab every baby I could from the river and bring them to safety. That would require stepping into the river of injustice. That would require risk.

Moses' mother made the insane choice, but the only choice really, of hiding her son for as long as she could, until she couldn't keep him secret any longer. She then made a plan. It was a crazy plan. She would follow the order to an extent. She made a basket and sealed the container so it wouldn't leak, put her baby boy inside, gave him a final look, a final slip of her finger from his grasp, and set it afloat in the river Nile. It wasn't a perfect plan- a lot of things could go wrong- a river can be dangerous. But it was a chance at survival, a chance at life. In that moment, all her hopes and dreams for the boy unraveled. All her plans for her son fell apart. Ever feel like everything you hoped for your children would never come to be? That for whatever reason, plans for their future unraveled into a pile of strings?

The boy's big sister, Miriam, would watch as the basket bobbed up and down in the current, terror caught in her throat at every splash that went over the top. And as the baby was pushed toward a small inlet where the Pharaoh's daughter bathed, Moses was at the mercy of an Egyptian princess, the daughter of the very one who gave the order against the Hebrew children. Miriam watched close by waiting and hoping and praying for what? An Act of God? Divine intervention? It seemed a little late for that- how many lives had already been lost? Maybe she simply hoped for an act of mercy in a merciless world. Perhaps a moment of justice in the face of countless injustices. Really just for her brother to live and be safe.

Then it happened, Pharaoh's daughter saw the basket and had it brought to her. We don't know anything about her. After this portion of scripture, we never hear of her again. We don't know if she was sympathetic to the Hebrew

people. We don't know if she had any children of her own or if she was unable to conceive. We don't know if she sought to defy her father. Or if she simply had a moment of compassion in seeing the little baby all alone floating to his death. Whether she knew it or not, she became an ally to an oppressed Hebrew family. Whether she knew it or not, she stepped into the river of injustice, interrupted the flow of violence, and bathed in grace. Whether she thought about it or not, she saved a life that would've been lost.

Miriam got up her courage and stepped out from her hiding place. She asked if she could find a nurse for the baby to help care for him, and when she got a positive response went and found her mother to share the news. Can you imagine the emotions this mother must have experienced? She gave up her baby to the river expecting to never see him again. She was most likely in a heap on the ground weeping uncontrollably when Miriam found her and led her to the princess. To be given back her son, even for just a little while, must have felt like divine intervention; like she had just been given a miracle, the rarest gift of hope in a hopeless world.

She would have to give him up again. She would have to hand him back to the princess again one day and her baby boy would become someone else's son. That too would be an impossible day, but at least she would know he was alive and cared for. She was a Hebrew woman with no rights, no authority, no agency. And yet, she claimed a moment of dignity when she took her son's future into her own hands and gave the ultimate sacrifice of love. She gave him the possibility of a future when he had none.

Miriam acted with bravery and wisdom on behalf of her brother. He couldn't speak. He couldn't advocate for himself. He couldn't choose life. But she watched him from the shore. She stepped out from hiding and into the terrifying presence of the royal family, of power in the flesh. She spoke up advocating for his care, for her mother, for hope.

The princess, she's bit of an enigma. She was acting against her father's orders. Did she know what she was doing? Did she know she would have to defend her decision for years as Moses grew up in the palace under the watchful eyes of Egyptian authority? She chose mercy. In one moment, she changed the course of history- for this one Hebrew family, for all Hebrew families, even for her own nation. And she could- she had privilege. She had power. This one act challenged the injustice happening throughout Egypt. This one act changed the flow of violence.

We have a role in the preferred future of God's design. God's preferred future is one of justice. It is one of freedom, life, hope, and peace. Where the oppressed go free, the captives are released, and the poor hear good news. God works in partnership with humanity. Moses' mother had to act with sacrificial love. Miriam had to act with courage and wisdom. The princess had to act with mercy. We need to act. We have agency that can impact the world. We have the power to change things- even when it feels like we don't sometimes. We are called to do what we can, to use our agency, our privilege, our power, our LOVE, to advocate and fight for the lives of those at-risk and oppressed, for those who can't speak for themselves. We are called to step into the river.

There's this great Charlie Brown cartoon that came through my Facebook feed recently. Charlie Brown and Linus are talking and Charlie Brown says, "I just don't understand why God allows so many bad things to happen in the world." To which Linus replies in all his wisdom, "I always thought God was asking us the same question." When bad things happen; when injustices are everywhere we turn; when humans are treating other humans like trash; we are called to act. God desires a world set right through mercy and justice. It's why Jesus came as a human being living and dying with sacrificial love, wisdom and bravery, abundant mercy- just like these three women in our story today.

We are called to step into the river. Maybe there is someone in your life who needs your hands to steady them. Maybe there is someone in your life who needs you to stand in the river and help them cross to safety. Maybe there is someone in your life who needs you to be brave, to take a risk, to advocate for them, to speak up for them- someone who needs your support because you are stronger in this moment. We have the ability to change the current simply by stepping in the water. And maybe in that act, God will show us what's possible.

Amen