

ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

EXODUS 2:5-10 | NOVEMBER 5/6, 2022

SIDE EYE

A SERMON BY REV. DR.

Judy Fentress-Williams
@JUDYFENTRESSWILLIAMS



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Date: November 5 and 6, 2022

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Judy Fentress Williams

Sermon Title: Side-Eye

Scripture: Exodus 2:5-10

The 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. When 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. Then 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?" Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh'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. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses,^[a] "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

SERMON SUMMARY

As a metaphor for this morning's scripture, Dr. Judy Fentress Williams calls us to consider how the human eye works. No matter how sharp our vision is, we cannot see behind us and we cannot see well outside our peripheral vision. At best, a human's ability to see is partial. This truth applies to the characters in this morning's text. Pharaoh's daughter's vision is partial. She cannot see all that will occur in Moses' life, nor can Miriam or Moses' mother. Each character interacts with limited sight. However, the God of Moses has perfect sight and will position obedient souls to see more than their physical eyes are designed to see. God positions Pharaoh's daughter, Miriam, and Moses's mother to see more than their eyes are designed to see. As they take in new information, their lives are disrupted. When we allow God to position us, we will see more than our eyes are designed to see, and our lives may be disrupted. Like the characters in this morning's text, when God positions us in this way, we must trust and obey God because while our sight is partial, God's sight is perfect.

Using the story of Moses' rescue from the river, Dr. Judy teaches us three things about trusting God's perfect sight and not our side-eye. The first lesson is that it is a miracle that Pharaoh's daughter even sees the basket floating down the river. As a woman of privilege and power, she did not "have to see" the basket, but she did. She did not give in to selective vision and did not look away from the disruption of the baby in the basket. Like Pharaoh's daughter, we must be willing to see all that is happening around us. We must be willing to be disrupted. Dr. Judy challenges us to respond to God's disruptions by being open to stepping outside our prescribed lives and seeing more than what is in front of us. The second lesson we learn in this sermon is that Pharaoh's daughter sees the basket and the baby in the basket. Pharaoh declared that all Hebrew boys were worthy of death. Yet his daughter, who would have been taught to see the Hebrews as vermin, instead sees

Moses as human and worthy of life. The second lesson in this text is that we must see the humanity of every man and woman. We cannot demean anyone God has created. Instead, we must see them as made in the image and likeness of God.

Finally, Dr. Judy opens the true meaning of Moses' name for us. While the princess said, she named him Moses because *she drew him out of the water*, the true meaning of his name is *a continual drawing forth*. The third lesson of this message is that God continually draws us out to do the work of God in the world. Once God draws us out, our task is to continue to trust that God, who has perfect sight, will complete the work that was begun in us. We do not need perfect sight because the God we love has perfect sight. We need to be willing to be interrupted by and obey our God.

KEY POINTS

1. Our sight is always limited, but God's sight is perfect.
2. We are called to see the full humanity of others. All people are made in the image and likeness of God.
3. A lesson we can learn from our visually impaired brothers and sisters is to use other "senses" to compensate for ones not so finely developed. Senses such as prayer, the Holy Spirit, and the presence and promise of God are available to us.
4. God continually draws us out to be of service to the world.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Judy said that "Big Mama" really did not have eyes in the back of her head. What other phrases or sayings did you grow up hearing? Do you have any favorite phrases of this kind that you use? What are they?
2. Think of a time when God altered/disrupted your plans. How did you feel? How long did it take you to recognize it as God's disruption and accept it?

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Judy paraphrases Genesis 1:26 when she reminds us that we are created in the image and likeness of God. What does the Bible say about the characteristics of God? Which of these characteristics radiate from you? What characteristics might others see in you that do not reflect God's image?

2. Our preacher tells us, “God loves selecting people on their way to do one thing and pulling them into something else.” In other words, God is good at disruptions! Name a Bible character whose life was disrupted by God and whose story serves as an important lesson for you.
3. Dr. Judy reminds us that Pharaoh's daughter is in a position to change the course of history, which was not the typical role for women. Which other women in the Bible changed the course of history? What do we learn from these women?

*Village Members and Facilitators,
The Curriculum Team does not expect you to cover all the questions. We ask the facilitators to
choose the best questions, in each section, for your Village.*

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Judy's opening prayer asks God to come into our virtual space and make it holy ground. We know we are in a sacred place when we go into the church building. How do you attempt to make your home sacred as you watch the sermon online? Does the place from which you watch the sermon make a difference?
2. When we get up in the morning, we cannot see the fullness of the day that extends before us. But imagine for a moment that you have a detailed calendar describing each moment of your life's next week. How does this change your behavior? How does this change your relationship with God? How might it change your prayer?
3. **DISRUPTION!!!!** How does this word make you feel? What behaviors are helpful as you prepare to respond when something disrupts your day? What are the unhelpful behaviors?
4. Dr. Judy reminds us that we have much to learn from our visually impaired brothers and sisters. They have to learn to rely on gifts other than sight. What is spiritually impaired in your life, and what do you rely on to help you with this impairment?

5. What categories of people do you see as other or less than? What were you taught that allowed you to see people in this way? Have you ever had an experience where you changed your view of a category of people? How did you do this? What did you learn?

“CAN I PUSH IT?” QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Judy says *seeing is a risky business* and what God wants from us is an openness to see what is around us. How has your privilege allowed you to avert your eyes from challenging issues? What are those issues? What would happen in your soul if you were willing to see these things?
2. Dr. Judy raises the concept of “selective vision.” How do you define selective vision? Do you think the church operates with selective vision? Is this good or bad?

ACTIVITY

Without sharing the name of the person, select someone whom you do not think well of. If every person is made in the image and likeness of God, this person is called to resemble God and radiate God's characteristics, too. What characteristics would you like to see developed in this person's life? Together with the other Villagers, make a list of the characteristics. At the closing of the Village, pray for God to guide the people you brought to mind in developing Godly characteristics.

SPIRIT WORK

Dr. Judy tells us we see best what is directly in front of us. However, God wants us to change our position to see more. Select a time of day, and set your alarm for that time each day over the next week. When your alarm goes off, stop what you are doing for a moment, and look around you. Look around you. Notice the people, the setting, everything. What do you see that you have not seen before? What do you see that would cause you to pray prayers of petition, thanksgiving, intercession, etc.? Stop and notice and then offer a prayer.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Within the structure of Village there are various affinity groups. Each week the team creates questions, especially for the individual groups. However, any village may draw from the questions listed below if the Spirit so moves.

For Married Couples

1. Life is full of disruptions. Are there things you do to disrupt the plans of your spouse? Ask your spouse how you can work to avoid being the source of such disruptions.
2. Dr. Judy says that sometimes we must “do a little David thing and encourage ourselves.” How do you encourage yourself when times are difficult? How would you like your spouse to encourage you when things go sideways?

For Young Adults

1. Dr. Judy describes Pharaoh's daughter as an unlikely character to save a Hebrew baby. Have you ever been the unlikely hero of a story? What did you do? How did it affect you?
2. This sermon reminds us that God is likely to call us out of our comfort zones and place us in challenging situations. What are your go-to moves when you find yourself outside your comfort zone? What is your go-to prayer?

For Parents

1. Dr. Judy tells the story of her high school running career. She retained her supremacy by limiting her sphere of engagement and staying in her comfort zone. How do you encourage your children to take the risk of going outside of their comfort zones, risking greater challenges, and reaching for wider experiences?
2. Dr. Judy asks us to consider the difference between our accomplishments and our value. We often ask our children, *what did you do today?* This question places value on their accomplishments. While the opportunity to talk about their activities is good, what question might you ask them that focuses on their soul's well-being?

For Seniors

1. Dr. Judy says some things cannot be unseen. Have you had an experience of seeing something that you did not mean to see, but once seeing it, it changed you? What did you see? How did it change you? If you were changed by what you saw, are you grateful?
2. Dr. Judy says we confuse our value with our accomplishments. What's the difference between your value and your accomplishments? What is your value in God's sight?

For Women

1. Dr. Judy mentions Deborah, sitting under a tree, minding her own business when Barak asks her to join him in war (see Judges, chapter 4). Have you ever been somewhere, minding your own business, and you are called into a challenging situation? How did you determine if this was your God-given assignment or someone asking you to join her thing? How do you know when it is a God interruption instead of a human disruption?
2. Dr. Judy talks about an experience in a maximum-security prison where she moved beyond her preconceived notions and saw the women as fellow mothers. Have you ever judged a group of women or been judged by a group of women? If you were the judge, what did that action cost you? If you were judged, what did that action cost you? What did you learn through this experience?

For Men

1. Dr. Judy mentions Gideon, who is threshing wheat in a winepress, trying to obtain food for his family, when he hears from an angel (see Judges, chapter 6). Have you ever been somewhere, minding your own business, and you are called into a challenging situation? How did you determine if this was your God-given assignment or someone asking you to join his thing? How do you know when it is a God interruption instead of a human disruption?
2. This sermon challenges us to identify those we see as less than or other and to, instead, see them as made in the image and likeness of God. Whom have you seen as less than? How can you move from seeing them as less than/other to being made in the image and likeness of God?

For Returning Citizens

1. Pharaoh's daughter is described as the woman in the position to change Moses' life. Whose life are you in a position to change? Into whose life do you feel God is calling you to pour?
2. Dr. Judy suggests that Pharaoh's daughter has been given alternative narratives about the Hebrew people, but she still sees Moses' humanity. Who in your life has seen you as one made in the image and likeness of God and has supported your humanity? What would you like to say to that person?

For Differently-Abled Persons/People

1. Dr. Judy says God is likely to call us to an assignment outside our skill set. Have you ever received an assignment from God that stretched you beyond your skill *set*? What did you do? How did you respond? What did you learn?
2. Everyone is made in God's image and likeness. God is in you and even calls you the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). When you look into the mirror, what do you see that reminds you of God?

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. *Imago Dei*, means the image of God. A definition of the Imago Dei follows.
 - a. A theological term applied uniquely to humans, which denotes the symbolical relation between God and humanity. The term has its roots in Genesis 1:26-27, wherein "God created man in his own image. . ." This scriptural passage does not mean that God is in human form but rather that humans are in the image of God in their moral, spiritual, and intellectual nature. Thus, humans mirror God's divinity in their ability to actualize the unique qualities with which they have been endowed and which make them different than all other creatures.
2. The Women in Moses' life.
 - a. In a prior sermon, Pastor Wesley told the stories of the women in Moses' life. To hear this sermon, please go to, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge_huCVW2II&t=3169s
 - b. Though not named in Exodus 2, the names of Moses' birth and adopted mothers, respectively, are Jocabed and Bithiah.