

***CRIBB<S>NOTE – August 24, 2008***

Courage is scarce. We don't see much of it among political leaders in Congress or the state legislature. We don't see a lot of courage among religious leaders in our churches. One of the reasons why there is such a short supply of courage is because we don't encourage each other. The lack of encouragement results in the dearth of courage.

Thus, when people fail to inspire bold action, God sometimes intervenes. Fortunately, divine intervention on a magnitude of enormous impact and biblical proportion is not a daily occurrence. But, we should not be deceived into believing God will not get involved in situations that are allowed to continue because people have lost interest. Instead, we must be aware of conditions that make innocent ones vulnerable and put at risk. We must find sufficient courage to do what is necessary, just, and right.

The story in Exodus about Shiphrah and Puah, two courageous midwives, reminds us of God's omnipresence. Amid the suffering of oppressed peoples, including young children who were slaughtered, God stepped into the picture. Although we may not think of God while disaster strikes, let there be no mistake; God works in mysterious ways.

Shiphrah and Puah took desperate action to save the lives of Hebrew baby boys after the Pharaoh issued an edict demanding their deaths. They protected the infants and kept them alive. They refused to kill the children. They disobeyed the king. They feared God more than man. They were courageous women. Their courage had a tremendous effect on other women, including the mother of Moses and his sister.

Although Pharaoh had issued a second call among the Egyptians to kill all Hebrew male babies by drowning them in the Nile River, Moses' mother built a small boat and placed her baby boy in it and let him float down the river.

Ironically, it landed in front of Pharaoh's daughter. The water that was supposed to kill him became his passage to safety. The family that was hostile to the Hebrews extended hospitality to the child who would eventually lead his people out of bondage. God works in mysterious ways.

It is not unusual for people to ask, "Where is God?" In fact, during the storms of life we call out praying for God to answer us and bring us through without calamity. We wonder "Does God really care?" "Does God know what we are going through?"

God knows and lives with us as we experience the vast array of life's experiences. God provides a community of sisters and brothers who stand with us through the hardest times. We have been placed here to encourage each other. The Holy Spirit is given as a promise of comfort and peace.

There are times when we remember Shiphrah and Puah, and we are reminded of their acts of faith and courage. Sometimes, it is necessary for us to embody their spirit and defy authorities who demand mistreatment of innocent people, including migrants, immigrants, the poor, and those who despair.

We need to encourage our religious and political leaders to have enough courage to do what is right and just for all people. They must act to protect the most vulnerable and those in dire need. We must encourage them to set aside gifts and favors from corporate interests, and become true representatives of all the people. In such times, we need at least two courageous women.