

**Proper 16, Year A**  
**The Rev. Martha L. Hubbard**

**August 24, 2008**  
**St. Paul's, Newburyport, MA**

*Did you know that Pharaoh's daughter was one of the two great financiers in the Bible? Yes, she went down to the Nile Bank and drew out a little prophet. (The other one was Noah -- he was floating his stocks while everyone else was in liquidation!) - Supplied by Wendofish on [www.desperatepreacher.com](http://www.desperatepreacher.com)*

I just could not resist those when I read them online this week! But seriously, I have loved our readings from the Hebrew Scriptures this summer. By way of these readings from Genesis and today from Exodus we have wound our way through the earliest generations of the covenant between Yahweh and the Hebrew people. We have read about, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Joseph and his brothers, and today we reach Moses. And we have seen the humanity of all of them – the strengths and the weaknesses. We have seen triumph and tragedy, love and betrayal, forgiveness, reconciliation, oppression. It is all so real, so human– there are so many footholds for us in each story- places where we can climb in and really relate.

Underlying all of the ups and downs, all the currents and tides of this lineal story is the promise – the covenant – strong and true – sometimes visible, sometimes hidden, but always there. In the most recent transition in the story, the transition from the Joseph part of the story to the Moses part of the story, the covenant goes from shining brightly out in the open with the family of Joseph reunited in the land of Egypt, where Joseph quite literally holds the keys to the kingdom, to the covenant being hidden with a

baby in a reed basket among the bull rushes. The keys to the kingdom of Egypt are taken from the Israelites, when a new king arose in Egypt who did not know Joseph and who feared the burgeoning population of Israelites might overwhelm his hold on power. But as one of my preaching buddies on-line this week wrote:

*"The Hebrews lost their external keys, but found that they were given life through their internal keys -- the mercy of the midwives, the courage of Moses' mom, the humility of Pharaoh's daughter to stand with the marginalized. It is these internal keys that give life and are signs of the REAL kingdom of God and God's people acting in our world. We like external keys -- nice car, big house, good job; but we live through the internal keys, the fruits of the Spirit, the times when we live "on earth as in heaven."*

*-Wendofish on [www.desperatepreacher.com](http://www.desperatepreacher.com)*

Reflecting on economic pinch that more and more of us in this society have been feeling lately, I feel a timely connection to this thought about external and internal keys to the kingdom.

Just the other night at dinner, we were listening to some music and a song came on the refrain of which was "We have everything we need right now". Marcella said, "Mommy, we don't have everything we need!" I said, "We don't? Well, let's see, we have each other, we have a house, we have food, we have 2 cars to get around in, we have clothes to wear, toys to play

with, books to read, we have friends, we have schools to learn in, Papa and I have work to do... seems to me like we have everything we need – maybe not everything we want, but everything we need.”

I said all of that more for my own benefit than for hers. I can feel poor, impoverished and unfulfilled if I keep my focus on things I don't have. But I can feel blessed beyond measure when I look around at all the good things that surround me. And then I realize just how much we have. And I realize that the pinch we have been feeling is minor in comparison to the everyday drudgery of those in our society and in our world who never make it into the comfort zone we call “enough.”

In his letter to the Romans Paul calls on Christians not to let ourselves be conformed to the world, but to let ourselves be transformed by the renewing of our minds. I believe the golden opportunity of these economic times is that we, who have always had “enough”, feeling the pinch, become awakened to the plight of those who do not have enough. I believe that feeling the pinch, even just a little, can increase our awareness and make us passionate for real change in our world. Dare we let the economic pinch of these times wake us to that reality. Dare we wonder how we might help make our world over into a place where everyone has enough to be comfortable? Dare we treasure the internal keys more than the external keys? Dare we give up a few of the external keys in order that someone in need has enough?

We only dare any of this with God's help in Christ. We only dare by virtue of the undergirding covenant that has been passed down to us as the current generation of the lineage of faith. If we think God might find better candidates than us, we need look no further than the Bible to see that God has always chosen, complex and contradictory folk. Look at our Gospel, at Peter the rock of the church, who confessed Jesus as the Christ. Just a few verses later in the Gospel, Jesus rebukes him for getting in the way of God's plan and tells him "Get behind me Satan."

Another online colleague this week wrote:

*"I am amazed at how God uses people to affect God's mission. He trusts us far more than I trust most people – much more than I trust myself! Peter and the disciples are given awesome responsibility for discipline (binding) and forgiving. The freedom of God's people is on the shoulders of a baby in a basket, raised by Egyptians. And, God makes us the body of God's mission as Paul tells us in Romans. I wonder, what he sees in us! I wonder if some of the 'power of the Gospel by which we are being saved' would be set free if we saw the same grace of God active in each other's imperfect love that God sees. Imagine how precious we must be in God's sight. Imagine how gifted each of us must be. Think of the responsibility and the honor that God is counting on us. All of you together are the rock on which the church is still being built." – Ia TWO on [www.desperatepreacher.com](http://www.desperatepreacher.com)*

And the church, that wonderful and sacred mystery, is the instrument by which God is bringing forth abundant life for all people and all of creation.

Dare we believe that? Dare we preach that? Dare we live that?

If you want to take these thoughts further I invite you to visit The Episcopal Public Policy Network website and the One Episcopalian website that are mentioned in the bulletin insert, and see if you feel called to join.

In Christ's name. Amen+