



St Barnabas Cray

Bulrushes, Boldness, and a Song of Praise

Weekly Devotional Journey

Monday - God Moves in Mysterious Ways

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV)

Devotional Thought

There is a phrase that has echoed through centuries of Christian devotion: 'God moves in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform.' It is a phrase that finds its living proof in the extraordinary story of two women most of us might never have heard of — Shiphrah and Puah, the Hebrew midwives who defied the most powerful ruler of their world to protect the most vulnerable members of their community.

Pharaoh had issued a decree of death. Every Hebrew baby boy was to be drowned in the Nile. It was a calculated act of political terror designed to suppress a people who had grown too numerous,

too strong, too threatening. And yet, in the face of this terrifying power, two humble women quietly, courageously, and at great personal risk, simply refused to comply. They lied to Pharaoh. They said the Hebrew women were so strong they gave birth before the midwives could arrive. It wasn't true — and the Bible doesn't flinch from telling us so. But their obedience to God outweighed their obedience to a foreign king.

This is deeply challenging territory. We live in a world that prizes transparency and values honesty — rightly so. And yet the Bible places before us a story where deception became an instrument of mercy, where the protection of innocent life took precedence over compliance with an unjust authority. The early church wrestled with this. Christians throughout history have wrestled with this. What it reveals is not a licence for dishonesty, but a profound truth: there are moments when faithfulness to God demands courage that the world cannot fully understand or approve of.

God did not choose generals or politicians to protect the line through which Moses — and ultimately Christ — would come. He chose two midwives. Ordinary women doing an ordinary job. And through their quiet, risky faithfulness, the purposes of God moved forward. This is how God so often works. Not through the spectacular, but through the surrendered. Not through the powerful, but through the humble. His ways are higher than our ways, and his wonders are performed through people we would never have predicted.

Reflection Question

When have you experienced God working through what seemed like an unlikely or even surprising set of circumstances? What did that teach you about the nature of his faithfulness?

From Sunday's Sermon

"God chooses who he needs. He doesn't choose necessarily powerful and influential people. He chooses humble people."

Today's Application

Begin this week by sitting quietly with the question of where God might be working mysteriously in your own life right now. Think of a situation that feels confusing, unresolved, or beyond your control. Rather than trying to force a solution or an explanation, practise what Proverbs calls 'submitting your ways' to God — which means releasing your grip on the outcome and trusting his direction.

Practically, take a few minutes today to write down one situation where you are tempted to lean on your own understanding rather than trusting God. Pray over it specifically, naming your fears and your desire for control. Ask God to give you the eyes to see where he is already at work, even if his methods are not what you expected. Consider sharing this with a trusted friend or prayer partner who can walk alongside you this week.

Morning Prayer

Lord, we confess that we often find it difficult to trust what we cannot see or understand. We are drawn to certainty, to control, to clear and predictable outcomes. But your ways are not our ways, and your thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Teach us the quiet courage of Shiphrah and Puah — to be faithful in the small, hidden places where you have placed us, trusting that your purposes are moving forward even when we cannot trace them. Help us to lean not on our own understanding, but to submit our lives, our decisions, and our uncertainties to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Devotion

Faithful in the Hidden Places

Evening Reflection

As this day draws to a close, take a moment to look back over it with gentle, unhurried attention. Where did you feel most in control today? Where did you feel most uncertain or out of your depth? The story of Shiphrah and Puah invites us to notice that faithfulness rarely looks dramatic from the outside. It often looks like showing up quietly, doing the right thing when no one is watching, making a small decision that costs you something.

These two women were remembered by name in God's story — a remarkable detail in a book that so often passes over individuals without a second glance. God noticed them. He honoured them.

He wove their small act of courage into the great tapestry of his redemptive plan. You may feel today that your faithfulness has gone unnoticed — by your family, your colleagues, perhaps even by yourself. But God sees the hidden places. He honours the quiet acts of obedience. Nothing done in love for him is ever wasted or forgotten.

Evening Reflection

Where today did you have an opportunity to be quietly faithful, even in a small or hidden way? Did you take it?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you that you see what is hidden. Thank you that you remember the names of the humble and the faithful. As I rest tonight, help me to trust that you are at work even in the things I cannot see or understand. May tomorrow bring fresh courage to follow where you lead. Amen.

Tuesday - Watching from the Riverbank: The Courage of Miriam

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

She named him Moses, saying, 'I drew him out of the water.' (Exodus 2:10b NIV)

Devotional Thought

There is something profoundly moving about the image of a young girl standing on the riverbank, watching over her baby brother hidden in a basket of bulrushes. Miriam — whose name we do not yet know at this point in the story — is watching, waiting, ready. She has no guarantee that this plan will work. She has no way of knowing that the baby she is guarding will one day lead an entire nation to freedom. She is simply faithful in the moment she has been given.

When Pharaoh's daughter comes down to the river and lifts the crying baby from the water, Miriam does not panic or run. She thinks quickly and acts with remarkable composure for a child. She steps forward and offers to find a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby. It is a moment of extraordinary presence of mind — and it results in Moses being returned to his own mother, cared for by his own family, even while officially under the protection of the royal household. What the sermon beautifully calls a 'God-incidence of events' — the kind of convergence that looks like coincidence to the casual observer but bears the unmistakable fingerprints of divine orchestration.

Miriam's courage here is not the courage of the battlefield. It is the courage of the ordinary moment — the willingness to step forward when stepping forward is risky, to speak when speaking requires nerve, to act when acting demands trust. This is the kind of courage that God calls most of us to most of the time. Not grand gestures, but faithful presence. Not heroic speeches, but timely words. Not dramatic interventions, but quiet, watchful readiness to act when the moment comes.

God had placed Miriam exactly where she needed to be. And she was paying attention. The question for us is whether we are paying attention — to the people around us, to the needs that are

visible, to the moments when a timely word or a small act of courage might change everything for someone else.

Reflection Question

Is there someone in your life right now who needs you to 'watch from the riverbank' — to be present, attentive, and ready to act on their behalf? What would faithful watchfulness look like in that relationship?

From Sunday's Sermon

"So not only did she agree that Miriam would fetch a Hebrew woman, but she also agreed that she would pay that woman to feed the baby. This was Miriam's moment."

Today's Application

Today, practise the discipline of attentive presence. Choose one person in your life — a family member, a colleague, a neighbour, a fellow church member — and make a deliberate effort to pay attention to them. Not to fix them or advise them, but simply to notice them. Ask how they are and actually listen to the answer. Look for what is beneath the surface of their words.

If you sense an opportunity to speak an encouraging word, offer practical help, or simply be present with someone who is struggling, take it — even if it feels slightly awkward or costs you a little time or energy. Miriam's moment came because she was already there, already watching. Ask God this morning to make you the kind of person who is present enough to notice when someone needs you, and courageous enough to act when the moment arrives.

Morning Prayer

Lord Jesus, you were the great noticer — you saw Zacchaeus in the tree, the woman who touched the hem of your garment, the widow giving her last coin. Teach me to see as you see. Open my eyes to the people around me who need someone to watch over them, to speak for them, to act on their behalf. Give me the quiet courage of Miriam — to be present, to be ready, and to step forward when you call me to. May I never be so distracted by my own concerns that I miss the moment you have prepared for me. Amen.

Evening Devotion**The God-Incidents of an Ordinary Day****Evening Reflection**

Look back over today with quiet, unhurried eyes. Were there any moments that, on reflection, feel less like coincidence and more like divine arrangement? A conversation that happened unexpectedly, a need you were uniquely placed to meet, a door that opened just when you needed it to?

The story of Miriam and Moses reminds us that God is constantly weaving together the threads of ordinary life into something far larger and more beautiful than we can see from where we stand. Pharaoh's daughter came to the river at just the right moment. Miriam was watching. Moses was crying. And through these small, unremarkable details, the plan of God moved forward. Your day, too, was full of moments that God was present in — even the ones that felt frustrating or insignificant. He is always working, always watching, always weaving. The question is whether we have eyes to see it.

Evening Reflection

Where did you notice a 'God-incidence' today — a moment that, on reflection, seemed to carry the fingerprints of divine care and arrangement?

Evening Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for the hidden ways you work in the ordinary moments of an ordinary day. Forgive me for the times I was too distracted to notice. As I rest tonight, help me to trust that you are weaving all things together for good, even the things I cannot yet see or understand. Amen.

Wednesday - Sing to the Lord a New Song: The Gift of Praise

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.' (Exodus 15:20-21 NIV)

Devotional Thought

Imagine the scene. The Israelites have just walked through the parted waters of the Red Sea. Behind them, the Egyptian army has been swallowed by the returning waves. Ahead of them lies the wilderness — unknown, demanding, full of uncertainty. And in that extraordinary moment, between the miracle behind them and the difficulty ahead, Miriam picks up her tambourine and leads the women in song.

This is not a small or incidental detail. Miriam is described here as a prophet — the first of nine female prophets named in the Old Testament. And her prophetic act is a song. The Song of the Sea

is one of the oldest pieces of poetry in the entire Bible, a declaration of God's power and faithfulness that would have echoed across the desert and lodged itself in the hearts of a people who would need its truth in the hard days to come. She composed the song that glorifies God for the victory over the Egyptian army and also prepares them, gives them strength for the difficulties and struggles that lie ahead.

This is what worship does. It is not merely an emotional response to good circumstances — it is a theological act, a deliberate choice to declare the truth about God in the face of whatever comes next. Miriam did not know what the wilderness would hold. Forty years of wandering, complaint, rebellion, hunger, and thirst lay ahead. But she led the people in praise anyway, because praise is not contingent on circumstances — it is rooted in the character of God, who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

Psalm 98, which was read in the service that gave rise to this sermon, carries almost identical language: 'Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.' The song of the sea and the psalm of the temple share the same conviction: God has acted, God is faithful, and the proper response of his people is praise.

Worship is not a warm-up act for the sermon. It is not a cultural preference or a matter of personal taste. It is the central, defining activity of God's people — and it has the power to sustain us through the hardest stretches of the journey.

Reflection Question

How do you experience worship — both gathered with others and in your private life? Is praise something that flows naturally from your heart, or does it sometimes feel like a discipline you have to choose deliberately?

From Sunday's Sermon

"She composed the song that glorifies God for the victory over the Egyptian army and also prepares them, gives them strength for the difficulties and struggles that lie ahead."

Today's Application

Today, make worship a deliberate, intentional act rather than something that happens only when you feel like it. Begin by spending five minutes in the morning simply thanking God — not asking for anything, not confessing anything, just declaring who he is and what he has done. You might use the words of Psalm 98 or the Song of the Sea as a starting point.

If music is meaningful to you, choose a hymn or a song of praise and listen to it or sing it during your day — on your commute, while you cook, during a lunch break. If music is not your primary language of worship, write a short prayer of praise, or take a walk and speak your thanksgiving aloud. The key is intentionality: choosing to praise God not because everything is easy, but because he is faithful, and his right hand has worked salvation. Let that truth anchor your day.

Morning Prayer

Lord, you are highly exalted. Your right hand is majestic in power. You have worked salvation — not just for Israel at the Red Sea, but for us, at the cross, where Christ defeated sin and death and opened the way to life. We praise you today not because our circumstances are easy, but because you are good and your mercies endure for ever. Teach us to be a people of praise — in the morning and the evening, in the wilderness and at the water's edge, in the hard seasons and the joyful ones. May worship be the rhythm of our lives, not just the habit of our Sunday mornings. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Devotion

Keeping Spirits Up Through the Wilderness

Evening Reflection

We are told that Miriam continued to lead the Israelite women for another forty years, certainly in song and poetry, to give them encouragement through the struggles of that journey to the land God had promised them, keeping their spirits up and their hopes alive. Forty years is a long time to keep singing. Forty years of wilderness wandering, of manna and complaint, of setbacks and moments of near-despair. And yet Miriam kept singing.

There is something deeply pastoral about that image. The wilderness is real. The struggles of life are real. And yet the call to praise does not disappear when the going gets hard — if anything, it becomes more urgent, more necessary, more life-giving. Think about the music that has sustained you through difficult seasons of your own life. A hymn that has carried you. A song that has spoken what you could not find words for. Music has a unique power to reach the places where words alone cannot go, to carry truth into the heart when the mind is exhausted.

As you end this day, let the truth of God's faithfulness settle quietly into your heart. He has not abandoned you in your wilderness. He is with you still.

Evening Reflection

What song, hymn, or piece of music has carried you through a difficult season? How did it sustain your faith?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you for the gift of music, for the songs that have carried your people through the wilderness across the centuries. Thank you that you are present in the hard seasons as well as the joyful ones. As I rest tonight, let the truth of your faithfulness be like a song in my heart — quiet, steady, and sure. Amen.

Thursday - God Chooses the Humble: Using the Gifts You Have Been Given

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone, it is the same God at work. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NIV)

Devotional Thought

One of the most quietly revolutionary truths in the Bible is that God does not tend to choose the people we would choose. He does not scan the room for the most qualified, the most confident, or the most impressive. He chooses the humble. He chooses the faithful. He chooses people who, by the world's reckoning, have very little to commend them — and through them, he accomplishes things that leave the powerful bewildered.

Consider the cast of characters in this week's story. Two midwives whose names would otherwise have been lost to history. A young girl watching from the riverbank. A baby hidden in a basket of reeds. A prophet who led her people in song for four decades. None of them would have appeared on a human shortlist for world-changing significance. And yet God used every one of them, precisely as they were, with precisely the gifts they had, in precisely the moment he had prepared for them.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians captures this beautifully. The gifts of the Spirit are not ranked in order of importance. There are different kinds of gifts, different kinds of service, different kinds of working — but the same God is at work in and through all of them. The person who teaches a Sunday school class and the person who leads a nation are both, in God's economy, exercising gifts that come from the same source and serve the same Lord.

This has profound implications for how we see ourselves and how we see one another. It is easy to

compare our gifts with those of others and conclude that ours are less significant, less useful, less worthy of investment. But that is not how God sees it. He has given you specific gifts — shaped by your personality, your experience, your history, your relationships — and he intends for you to use them. Not when you feel more ready, not when you have more confidence, not when circumstances are more favourable. Now. As you are. Where you are.

There is no way of knowing that this very day he might have someone in our own congregation who he has set aside for a special task that he wishes them to fulfil for him. And he will give them the strength to do that.

Reflection Question

What gifts, abilities, or experiences has God given you that you have perhaps undervalued or left unused? What might it look like to offer them more fully to him?

From Sunday's Sermon

"God chooses who he needs. He doesn't choose necessarily powerful and influential people. He chooses humble people. There's no way of knowing that this very day he might have someone in our own congregation who he has set aside for a special task that he wishes them to fulfil for him."

Today's Application

Today, take a practical step towards identifying and offering your gifts. Begin by asking yourself honestly: what can I do that others find difficult? What do I do that seems to bring life, help, or encouragement to others? These are often clues to the gifts God has placed in you. You might also ask a trusted friend or your church leader how they see your gifts expressed.

Once you have identified one or two gifts, ask God specifically how he might want you to use them — in your church community, your neighbourhood, your workplace, or your family. Then take one concrete step this week: volunteer for something, offer to help with something, say yes to an invitation you might otherwise decline. Humility does not mean hiding your gifts — it means offering

them without demanding recognition, trusting that God will use what you place in his hands.

Morning Prayer

Lord, forgive me for the times I have buried the gifts you have given me — through fear, through comparison, through the false belief that I have nothing significant to offer. Thank you that you do not call the equipped; you equip the called. Thank you that you chose midwives and young girls and humble leaders to accomplish your purposes. Help me to see myself as you see me — gifted, called, and held in your faithful hands. Give me the courage to offer what I have, however small it seems, and trust you to multiply it for your glory. Amen.

Evening Devotion

The Same God at Work in All

Evening Reflection

As the day ends, reflect on the people you have encountered today — at work, at home, in your church, in your neighbourhood. Each of them, if they belong to Christ, carries gifts from the same Spirit. Each of them is being shaped by the same God for purposes that may not yet be fully visible.

It is easy to overlook the gifts of ordinary people. We are drawn to the spectacular, the impressive, the visible. But the God who chose Shiphrah and Puah, who chose Miriam, who chose Moses — that same God is at work in the quiet, faithful, unspectacular lives of the people around you. The person who prays faithfully for others. The one who always notices when someone is struggling. The one who makes the tea, sets out the chairs, sends the card. These are gifts too. And they matter.

Ask God to give you eyes to see the gifts in the people around you — and the grace to tell them so.

Evening Reflection

Whose gifts have you perhaps overlooked or taken for granted today? How might you encourage them?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you for the extraordinary diversity of gifts you have placed in your people. Forgive me for the times I have overlooked or undervalued the gifts of those around me. As I rest tonight, help me to see others as you see them — chosen, gifted, and precious. And help me to be generous with my encouragement tomorrow. Amen.

Friday - Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve**Morning Devotion****Today's Verse**

But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.
(Joshua 24:15 NIV)

Devotional Thought

The entire sweep of this week's reflection has been moving towards this point. From the quiet courage of the midwives to the watchful faithfulness of Miriam, from the song of praise at the Red Sea to the humble offering of gifts — all of it is, at its heart, about a fundamental choice. Whom will we serve? What will we give our lives to? What will we allow to occupy the throne of our hearts?

Joshua's challenge to the Israelites at the end of his life was not delivered in a moment of crisis. It was delivered after decades of God's faithfulness — after the Exodus, the wilderness, the crossing

of the Jordan, the settlement of the Promised Land. And yet, even with all of that history behind them, Joshua knew that the choice to serve God was not a one-time decision made at a moment of spiritual high tide. It was a daily, renewable, costly commitment. Choose this day. Not just once. Today.

Jesus said the same thing in different words: no one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. The sermon wisely broadens this: in our case, it might be money, but it might be other things that we prioritise in our lives. There are so many distractions, so many things that seem so very, very important and are captivating and take us away from that priority of listening to God and following what he is prompting us to do.

This is not a counsel of despair — it is an invitation to clarity. The Christian life is not about perfection; it is about direction. It is about the daily renewal of a choice that was first made at conversion but must be lived out again and again in the ordinary moments of ordinary days. Moses, the most humble man who ever lived, pointed forward to Christ — and his final word to his people was: you must listen to him. That is still the word for us today. Amid all the noise and distraction, all the competing claims on our attention and our loyalty — listen to him. Follow him. Serve him. Choose him. Today.

Reflection Question

What are the things — good things, perhaps, as well as obviously harmful ones — that most compete with God for first place in your life? What would it look like to surrender them more fully to him?

From Sunday's Sermon

"So many distractions, so many things that seem so very, very important and are captivating and take us away from that priority of listening to God and following what he is prompting us to do."

Today's Application

End this week with a deliberate act of recommitment. Take ten minutes today to sit quietly before God and honestly name the things that have been competing with him for first place in your heart this week — not to condemn yourself, but to bring them into the light. It might be worry, ambition, the need for approval, the pull of screens and entertainment, the demands of busyness, or the comfort of financial security.

Then, one by one, offer them to God. You might use Joshua's words as a framework: 'As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.' Say it aloud if you can. Write it down. Make it concrete. Then identify one practical change you can make next week that reflects this renewed commitment — perhaps a habit to begin, something to lay down, a relationship to invest in more intentionally, or a regular time of quiet listening to God that you will protect and prioritise.

Morning Prayer

Lord, we come to the end of this week's journey with grateful hearts. We have walked with midwives and a young girl on a riverbank, with a prophet and her tambourine, with a humble leader and his impossible calling. And in all of them, we have seen your faithfulness — your willingness to work through ordinary, humble, sometimes frightened people to accomplish your extraordinary purposes. Help us, Lord, amidst all the noise and distraction of life, to hear you speaking to us. Guide us. Help us to follow your way, your path, your leading, that we may serve you and do your will. Help us to take risks if we need to — to do the things, even if they seem difficult and strange, that you would like us to do. Fill us with your strength and your determination. As for us, Lord — we choose you. Amen.

Evening Devotion

You Must Listen to Him

Evening Reflection

Moses, at the end of his extraordinary life, pointed forward beyond himself to one who was still to come. The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. And that prophet, as we know, was the Son of God himself — Jesus Christ, who came not merely to deliver a people from physical slavery, but to set all of humanity free from sin and death.

As this week draws to a close, that final instruction of Moses is the word that lingers: you must listen to him. Not just hear him. Not just know about him. Listen — with the attentive, obedient, responsive posture of someone who intends to act on what they hear. This week you have been invited to trust God's mysterious ways, to be faithfully present to those around you, to praise him in the wilderness, to offer your gifts humbly, and to renew your commitment to serve him above all else. These are not separate disciplines — they are all expressions of the same fundamental posture: listening to Christ, and following where he leads.

Rest well tonight. And tomorrow, listen.

Evening Reflection

As you look back over this week, where have you most clearly heard God speaking to you? What is he asking you to do in response?

Evening Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the prophet Moses foretold, the Son of God who came to set us free. As I rest tonight, quiet my heart and help me to listen — truly listen — to your voice above all the other voices that compete for my attention. Thank you for this week, for the stories that have shaped and challenged me, for the grace that has met me in my weakness. Lead me forward into the week ahead. I am yours. Amen.