

[PRAYER] Well, here we are, getting ready to say goodbye to summer! I've enjoyed starting my service to you this summer, and I look forward to a fall filled with activity, growth, and the promise of God's transformation in us. Some of us are going back to school - including me, next week! - and some of us will begin the challenges of helping our loved ones to be successful in school. I saw that happening this week across the street, as parents brought their children to their elementary school orientation. Growing families, preparing for a future of hope - that's what our community needs, and that's what we, as God's church, should be helping them to do.

How we help families to move into the future is not as simple as it used to be - not that it ever was as simple as we might have thought it was. The problem that we face, again and again, is that we think that the future that we're preparing our families for should look pretty much like today. If you don't think that's very true, just take a look at what the family of the future looked like about fifty years ago: [["THE JETSONS" YOUTUBE CLIP](#)] Wow, that's the future! It looks pretty much like...the 1960s, when "The Jetsons" TV show was made. The future was going to be the same kind of jobs, the same kinds of people, the same kinds of problems, solved with the same kinds of solutions. They got some things right about technology, of course, but they saw the future being pretty much the same.

Well, maybe sometimes that's what happens, for a while; but then, things change. And when they change, our solutions have to change, too. We see this right here in Meriden, where so many of the places where people worked since this church was founded have long disappeared. The railroads, once so important to this city, dwindled, as automobiles and trucks changed our landscape. New families moved in as older families moved out, families who didn't grow up with many of the assumptions that that families who built this church had. The generation that watched "The Jetsons," the same generation that went to Sunday school in our education building next door, had many vastly different assumptions about the future than today's families have. Things changed. And, so, our solutions have to change.

We see this happening in today's Old Testament reading, as the story of Israel shifts from the time of Joseph, son of Jacob, to the time of Moses. As you may recall from our Bible readings these past few weeks, after a rocky start, Joseph and his family found a good life for themselves in Egypt. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, had encouraged Joseph's family, and other people from Canaan, to settle in Goshen, a very lush and fertile land in the delta of the Nile River. Joseph prospered, as did many Canaanites in Goshen. Modern archaeology confirms this, and has even found a tomb statue of a prominent Canaanite wearing a coat of many colors - a coat like Jacob had given to his son Joseph when he was a boy. To Joseph's people, no doubt their future was like "The Jetsons" - more prosperity, with little change for their families.

But then, as we shift in the Bible from the book of Genesis to the book of Exodus, things changed. There was a new Pharaoh, probably not like the one who we see in movies like "The Ten Commandments," but one who now saw the Canaanites

in Goshen as foreigners who threatened native Egyptians. The Hebrew families of Jacob and other Canaanites in Goshen had their farming and grazing lands taken away from them by this Pharaoh. Instead, they were forced to build store cities, places where the food produced on the land worked by the Canaanites could be stored - and controlled - by Pharaoh. Archaeology confirms this also: Under the remains of Rameses, one of the store-cities mentioned in Exodus, lies a previous settlement of Canaanites, who appeared to be quite prosperous at first, but then began to become poor rapidly, with many deaths.

All of a sudden, the future looked much different for the people of Israel, the children of Jacob. They were in the same place, looking at the same land, but who they were in that place had changed radically. Families who used to work and play with their Egyptian neighbors were now their slaves, their fieldworkers, their forced labor, their housekeepers. The new Pharaoh wanted to prevent these slaves from rebelling, so he established a new policy - kill all the newborn Israelite boys, so that they would not grow up to be soldiers, and property owners.

Think of how this moment in the history of Israel compares to just a few short generations before. The Israelites had gone from being the families of the future, to people who would have no families in the future. The people of God's promise to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, would disappear from the earth. How did this happen? I found a documentary about the creators of "The Jetsons" that may help to explain why this might have happened: [[SECOND VIDEO CLIP 0:35-0:56](#)]

You see, it's not just circumstances that change when we move from the story of Genesis to the story of Exodus in the Bible. We're also moving to a new phase in our faith journey, a phase in which just feeling good about what God has given us in good times is not enough. It's important to feel good about our faith, to have those warm feelings about God as we look at our past, our present, and our future. And you can turn on the TV, read a self-help book, or go to any number of today's churches to do just that. But true faith, deep faith, faith that helps us to become who we are really meant to be as God's children, faith that will grow God's family of the future for generations to come, requires far more. It requires that we let go of our story, and allow it to become God's story, no matter how much we may fear that our version of that story will be lost when we let go.

This is what the Hebrew midwives understood when they heard Pharaoh's command to kill their baby boys. As Exodus 1:17 tells us, they used the only power that they had - their awe-filled reverence for God, who had promised them a bright future, forever - and disobeyed Pharaoh, for the sake of God's future. They let go of Pharaoh's story, and let their faith in God be their one and only story for all time. This is what the mother of Moses did, as she placed her beloved baby Moses in a tiny basket, and floated it down the river, her hopes for her family's future literally floating away from her into God's hands. She had to trust that Pharaoh's daughter and her handmaids would have a place in their heart for a child whose future had become so

horrible. She had to trust, and cooperate with, people who had turned on her people, for the future of God's family.

I see many bright, and hopeful, and, I pray, joyful moments for our church in the months and years ahead. I see families of all kinds, of all generations, of all walks of life, of all orientations, coming together as God's beloved family in Christ, and deciding, as the apostle Paul suggests in today's reading from Romans, not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds and hearts, so that we may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect - together. I see women, men, and children, putting aside the hatred and division that has torn our world apart, and putting aside feel-good solutions to our own selfish concerns, and discovering the rich rewards of a Christian life that only living God's story as our story, together, can provide.

And in the sunrise of a future day that I may or may not ever live to see, I see God's people rising up in this place, and all over God's earth, and beginning the journey of discovering a future built on God's promises, not the promises of politicians, cultural elites, false idols, false allegiances, false senses of safety and integrity, that collapse at the first sound of Pharaoh's footsteps behind us. I see, on this dim but God-promised horizon, the family of the future, built on the unshakeable integrity of God's promises, reaching out to all of God's families, plucking up their dashed hopes, floating in a forgotten basket on the river of their tears, and bringing us all together towards God's joyful future. I see God's future. I see God's hope. And, so, I hope.

I hope and pray that we will hope for this future together. I hope and pray that we will cast aside our fears, our doubts, our alienation from people all around us who are God's future, and start to work together to build that future, founded on God's promises and hope. It starts with the basics, as it did with the midwives: turning our heart's hope first and foremost to God, who is our one true king, our true salvation. It turns into courageous action, like Moses' mother: putting our future where our faith is, and trusting in God's solutions. Go home and pray, or come here during the week, and pray. Study your Bible, alone, and together. Dedicate yourself to some important part of our mission. The future of God's family depends on it. And, so, does yours; now and forever. Amen.