Miriam - A Devoted Daughter

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0:00] Well, if we could, this evening, for a short while, could we turn back to that second portion of Scripture that we read in Exodus chapter 15. Exodus chapter 15, and verse 20.

We're going to look at each of the portions of Scripture that we read in turn, but to base our study this evening, Exodus 15 and verse 20.
Verses 20 and 21. Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing.
And Miriam sang to them, Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.
And so this evening I'd like us to continue a character study of some of the women in the Bible. And as we've progressed throughout the Bible, through the narrative of Scripture, we've encountered different women so far.
[1:15] And we've encountered these women who have all played a crucial role in the story of redemption. Because so far we've considered the first woman, Eve, who was the mother of all living.

Then we met Sarah, who was Abraham's wife, and she was the mother of the covenant promise. Then we looked at Rebecca, who was Isaac's willing wife.
She was willing to follow him, to go with him. And last time we were introduced to Moses' mother, the mother of Moses, Aaron and Miriam, Jochebed.
And we saw that she was a faithful mother in Egypt. But what unites all of these women, as women in the Bible, is that each and every one of them can be described as daughters of the king.
They are daughters of the king, or the king of kings. And this evening I'd like us to spend a short while looking at the life and character of this daughter. This daughter called Miriam.
[2:17] Miriam, she was not only a daughter of the king of kings, but she was also the devoted daughter of her mother, Jochebed.

Like many women in the Bible, not much is said about them. We've seen that in our study so far. Not much is given to us. We're only given these glimpses of these women on the pages of Scripture.
But, of course, the amount that is written about them, it doesn't in any way minimise their importance for us. Because there are many things that we can learn from them.
And the same is true of this devoted daughter, Miriam. And that's the first thing I'd like us to see this evening. That there are four things, but the first thing is Miriam's devotion.
Miriam's devotion. Because the first glimpse we are given of this daughter of the king, or this devoted daughter, it's at the banks of the River Nile.
[3:20] Back, as we saw in Exodus chapter 2. With the edict of Pharaoh, it has gone out, it's been issued, that all the male children of the Israelites, they were to be drowned in the River Nile.

All those who are born to the Hebrews, they were to be drowned. And so, when we're introduced to Miriam, we find this little girl hiding in the rushes, watching over her three-month-old brother.
Her brother called Moses. And he's just floating in the River Nile. And, although we aren't given much in the narrative, there is something so telling about the character of Miriam.
That she had been taught by her mother. Because, when we see Miriam, although she was maybe only about eight or nine years old at the time, Miriam was one who had learned from her mother's example.
Because in those three months after Moses was born, Miriam witnessed her mother, Jochebed, perform the instinctive duty of a mother by risking everything in order to try and preserve her son's life.

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[4:29] And Miriam would not only have learned the important lesson, looking at her mother, the important lesson of how precious life really is. And that life is not to be terminated according to man's appointment.

Miriam would also have learned that the Word of God is authoritative in the life of the believer. And not the Word of the state. Because in the actions of Jochebed hiding Moses for three months, Miriam saw faith in action.
She saw faith in action as her mother refused to hand over her son to the world to be put to death. Miriam saw her mother submit to that higher authority.
And submit to the edict of the king of kings, rather than submitting to the authority of the Pharaoh and his edict as the king of Egypt.
And in her mother's obedience and faithfulness, Miriam also witnessed the blessing of the Lord. The blessing that she received Moses back after putting him into the river.
[5:39] And that was always the covenant promise of the Lord. That obedience equals blessing. Obedience will bring blessing. And so by witnessing such an example in her life through her mother, Miriam sought to imitate the actions of her mother.

Because we're told that in Exodus chapter 2, we're told that Miriam stood afar off to see what would happen to Moses.
Miriam stood afar off to see what would happen to Moses. And these words, they not only show that Miriam had inherited this courage from her mother, it also shows that she too had realised that what Pharaoh was dictating was against God's law and against God's people.
But above all that, by standing afar off and waiting to see what would happen to her little brother, Miriam was displaying devotion to her mother and devotion to her brother.
Miriam was displaying devotion to her family, love towards her family. And, of course, we can learn the lessons from that, the importance of showing devotion and love towards our own family.
[7:00] But I believe there's a spiritual lesson for us in this too. Because, if you allow me in some sense to spiritualise this, what was going on at the River Nile and all that was going on between Jochebed and Miriam and Moses.

If you allow me to spiritualise it, I want us to see what Calvin said about the church. Calvin said that if God is our father, then the church must be our mother.
And so in the character of Miriam, we can learn that we need to be devoted to the church and we need to be devoted to our brothers and sisters in Christ.
We need to learn from the example of our mother and be devoted to the church of Jesus Christ. And, you know, this is a great lesson which we need to rediscover in our day and generation. Because in order to learn from our spiritual mother, the church, in order to learn from the example of the older generation of Christians in the church, we must, first of all, be willing to learn.
[8:12] Because we can't be taught anything unless we have a humble spirit which is teachable. And that's what's often missing in our day and generation. A teachable spirit.

A willingness to learn. Because what often happens is that those younger in the faith think that they have all the answers. They know everything already.
But like it was for Miriam as a young girl, she was to be taught by her mother. And she had to be willing to be taught by her mother. And that was the thing about Jewish girls.
They would live with their mother and remain under the care and guidance of their mother until they got married. And for many of us, I suppose in that sense, we have been taught by our spiritual mother.
Because when we were young in the faith and everything was new to us, many of us, I'm sure that many of us here, we had the privilege of older Christians who were our spiritual mothers and our spiritual fathers, whether it was Christian parents or Christian neighbours or Christian elders in the church, many of which maybe have now gone home to glory.
[9:30] But we can say tonight that we had the privilege of sitting at their feet and learning from their godly example. Because we learned then how to be devoted to the Lord and to the things of the Lord.

We learned about the importance of being dedicated to the church of Jesus Christ. We learned from the example of their life and their character and their witness how to be committed Christians who are loyal and dutiful in the service of our King.

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My friend, we learned from the spiritual mothers and fathers whom the Lord graciously put in our path to gently encourage us and teach us and shape us how to live as the people of God in Egypt. But the reason we have been taught by others wasn't so that we would keep this information to ourselves. We weren't taught how to be devoted and committed and loyal and dutiful Christians in order that we will do nothing with it.
No, we were taught and we learn from those who went before us so that like Miriam who acted out of love towards her mother and towards her brother that we too would act out of love and devotion to Christ's church and to stand and watch over our younger brothers and sisters within the household of faith and that we too would pass on that same love devotion care and support that we received by those who went before us.
[11:14] And you know that's what we were singing about in Psalm 48 that's those precious words in Psalm 48 where the psalmist he's describing the greatness and the glory of the king who dwells in Zion.

This wonderful king who's in Zion. But at the end of Psalm 48 the psalmist says as we have heard so have we seen.
And so the point he's making is that we not only heard about the king of Zion in our youth but now as those who are citizens of Zion we've come to see the king of Zion for ourselves.
We've come to know of the king's mercy. We've come to experience the king's grace. And then the psalmist goes on to say right at the end I love those words he says walk about Zion.
Go round about her. Consider her towers. Mark her bulwarks. Consider her palaces. And he says look at all these things that are in Zion in order that you'll see her beauty and her glory.
[12:24] A glory that reflects the king of Zion. But then the psalmist he calls us to consider the wonder of Mount Zion for one purpose. He says that you may be devoted.

That you may tell it to the generation following. That this God is our God. and he will be our guide even unto death.
That was the purpose. And that is the commission of the church of Jesus Christ. We are to make disciples. We are to disciple those younger in the faith just like Miriam did.
By watching over our younger brothers and sisters and encourage them to follow the teaching of our spiritual mother the church.
And so we have Miriam's devotion. Miriam's devotion but then secondly we see Miriam's dance. Miriam's dance. And if we read just again at verse 20 here in Exodus chapter 15.
[13:33] Then Miriam the prophetess the sister of Aaron took a tambourine in her hand and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing and Miriam sang to them Sing to the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously.

The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. So this is the first time that Miriam is mentioned by name in the Bible. And she's introduced to us here as Aaron's sister because Miriam was the eldest of her two brothers who were Aaron and Moses.
But in this second little glimpse of Miriam's life which we have here Miriam is not only introduced to us as Miriam Aaron's older sister she's also introduced to us as Miriam the prophetess.
It says then Miriam the prophetess the sister of Aaron. And I suppose many argue from these texts such as this one and many others that if the Bible mentions prophesying or being a woman prophetess it immediately implies that women should somehow be ministers or preachers of God's word.
I just want to highlight this quickly. But of course when we see something like that we have to use the rule. And the rule is that scripture must always interpret scripture.
[15:01] And Paul clearly states in 1 Timothy 2 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man but to be in silence. And Paul bases his teaching upon the order of creation.

He simply says Adam was formed first then the woman. But that's it. It doesn't explain why Miriam is a prophetess. And I'd like to suggest to you that Miriam's role as a prophetess was not to prophesy to all the people of Israel like Moses did.
Rather Miriam's role was to prophesy and relay the message of the Lord to the woman of Israel.
And I suppose you could say that Miriam's ministry was a ministry to women.
That doesn't mean her ministry was somehow inferior to what Moses was doing not at all. Rather it made her her ministry narrowed focused and more specific.

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And that's what we see here because after Moses has sung his great song of victory to the Lord for delivering the children of Israel from slavery and bondage in Egypt and for allowing them to pass through the Red Sea and for destroying and drowning all of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. [16:21] It's then that Miriam the prophetess steps forward to lead all the women of Israel in this chorus of praise in which they sing and dance to the Lord for his wonderful act of salvation.

And that's what we're told in these verses. Then Miriam the prophetess the sister of Aaron took a tambourine in her hand and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing and Miriam sang to them sing to the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.
But what we ought to notice is that Miriam's prophetic word or her song that she sings she wasn't showing authority over Moses because she was actually repeating the opening words of Moses' song in verse 1 because it says then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord I will sing to the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. And Miriam echoes these words of Moses' song and she called the women of Israel to dance and to sing because these were words of triumph they're words of victory in which the children of Israel they could not only look back in thankfulness at what the Lord had done in delivering them from Egypt but in these words they could also look forward in confidence in what the Lord was going to do for his people throughout the rest of their wilderness journey and this is what I think is interesting about Miriam's ministry that her ministry was a ministry to women in order to encourage them to rejoice in the salvation of the Lord Miriam's role was to be an encourager to the women in Israel and you know we need Miriam's and Barvis too to encourage the women in
Barvis because the Lord not only provides men like Barnabas for his church as you know the name Barnabas means the son of encouragement and Barnabas he was a great encouragement to the apostle Paul when they were travelling on all their missionary journeys where he was always by Paul's side always encouraging Paul in the work of the ministry and that was Barnabas ministry his ministry was to encourage Paul in his faith and to encourage those whom Paul and Barnabas met on their missionary journeys but the Lord not only provides men like Barnabas for his church the Lord not only provides sons of encouragement he also provides daughters of encouragement the Lord also provides Miriams because as you know the Lord's people and those who are not the Lord's people they can go through the most trying of circumstances and they can experience the darkness of trial or the pain of loss or the depth of suffering but what sometimes makes the journey more bearable if I could use that phrase what makes it more bearable for those who are going through difficulty is when a Barnabas or a
[19:52] Miriam takes the time to encourage them not to ignore their suffering but to encourage them to rejoice in the Lord in the midst of their suffering my friend Miriams are needed just as much as Barnabases are needed because looking at Miriam I'm more convinced than ever that women have a clear role in scripture and their role is to be encouraged it's not just the role of an elder or a minister to be visiting the parish but as women maybe in twos or threes there are women in our community who need to be ministered to and I'm sure that there are many women who would probably benefit more if a woman visited them and gave them a little encouragement more than me or one of the elders and that's not to take away from my responsibility or the responsibility of the elders to do visiting but there are so many there are so many widows so many housebound so many sick so many mourning so much need so much need and that's what Miriam saw she saw the need she saw the need of other women and she acted upon it she saw the need and she responded to the need but you know a woman's ministry doesn't have to be confined to visiting you could hold a woman's prayer meeting pray together pray for one another pray for the

Lord's cause you could have a woman's bible study learn together learn from one another and even the WFM I don't know much about it but I'd encourage you to keep it going and seek to make use of it as an evangelistic and an outreach tool for the good of the community and the women in the community because we need Miriams to encourage other women to rejoice in the Lord's salvation we need Miriams so we've seen Miriams devotion Miriams dance but thirdly we see Miriams disobedience Miriams disobedience the third glimpse with given of the life and character of Miriam was in Numbers chapter 12 and it's there in Numbers chapter 12 that Miriam for all her devotion and all her encouragement it's there that we see that she wasn't perfect because when we come to Numbers chapter 12 we're confronted by a family feud in which Miriam and Aaron rise up in rebellion against their brother Moses and of what we've seen so far of Miriam we wouldn't expect

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this from her we wouldn't expect these actions from a woman who was devoted to her mother and devoted to her brother and a woman who sought to encourage the Lord's people to rejoice in the Lord's salvation and looking at chapter 12 of Numbers it seems out of character for Miriam to act in this rebellious way but what's interesting is that the name Miriam it means rebellion and so in Numbers chapter 12 Miriam she's only living up to her name but more than that it seems that this rebellion against Moses it was instigated by Miriam and not by her brother Aaron because if we were to consider the words which are used in the Hebrew text we'd see that because Hebrew is a gender specific language it has masculine and feminine words we'd see that all the words at the beginning of the chapter they're all feminine in the feminine gender which indicates that Miriam is the one who is the brains behind this rebellion against Moses but this family feud and rebellion against Moses it arose just as you see previously in chapter 11 it's just after when God appointed 70 elders to help Moses in bearing the burdens of the people Moses Moses had been struggling with the burden of leading all the children of Israel through the wilderness and so much so that he wanted to die he'd had enough but the Lord then provided for him 70 elders to bear the burden but these appointments they only annoyed Miriam and Aaron because they wanted to share this prophetic leadership over Israel they wanted to share it with Moses and so Miriam and Aaron they accuse Moses of breaking God's law by marrying a woman who was not an Israelite and it says in chapter 12 at verse 1 then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman or the Cushant whom he had married for he had married an Ethiopian woman but the accusation that they give it's only a distraction it's only a diversion from the real issue because we're told in the following verse 2 that Miriam and Aaron they're speaking with one another behind Moses' back and they're asking each other has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses has he not spoken through us also and so the real issue for Miriam and Aaron was that they were seeking to lay claim to Moses' position Miriam the prophet and Aaron the high priest they wanted equality in the rights they wanted the same position that Moses had they wanted this position of prominence they wanted a promotion and of course all of this arose because of jealousy there was a bitter jealousy within this family and this is nothing new
[26:16] I'm sure that if you go to every community throughout our island there are often family feuds which have arisen because of jealousy but what makes this situation between Miriam Aaron and Moses what makes it even harder is that this feud has arisen because of spiritual jealousy and sometimes spiritual jealousy within the family of God's people is far harder to deal with jealousy at an ordinary level it can be dangerous and volatile because it's always escalating and it can go out of control but spiritual jealousy it can eat away at a person and suppress their spiritual life to almost nothing because it can cause them to be bitter and harbour grudges and express dislike and disunity and discord between the people of God where there's this constant backbiting and backstabbing and badmouthing but what's solemn about this event of jealousy and spitefulness is that we're told in verse 2 that the Lord heard it the Lord heard it the Lord hears all out back chat and all out backbiting and he hears out critical comments about

God's people and God's servants and the Lord will deal with it because when the Lord heard that Miriam and Aaron when he'd heard what they were saying about Moses we're told that the Lord called the three of them you three he says he calls them to the tabernacle and he explains to Miriam and Aaron that Moses was his faithful servant whom he had chosen and with whom he speaks face to face but in order to teach Miriam about her disobedience she was struck down with leprosy and Miriam's leprosy was so unexpected that it had this dramatic effect upon all of the people of Israel the whole nation of Israel was shocked at what happened because Miriam was known by everyone for her encouragement and her devotion but to hear that Miriam had been struck down with leprosy and exiled out of the camp for a week it would have left a lasting impression upon the people of Israel of her disobedience against the Lord in fact Miriam's leprosy became a warning to the people of Israel not to disobey the Lord and not to speak against God's servants because in Deuteronomy chapter 24 verse 9 the Israelites issued a law Deuteronomy 24 is full of different laws but verse 9 says remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam on the way when you came out of Egypt Miriam's disobedience was a lesson to all the children of Israel and to us because through her disobedience Miriam learned the solemn lesson touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm but I don't our lasting memory of Miriam to be negative because as we've seen there are many positive things that are given to us in scripture so we've seen

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Miriam's devotion Miriam's dance Miriam's disobedience but lastly I'd like us to conclude with Miriam's description Miriam's description we've seen before that we're only given little glimpses of this woman in the narrative of scripture but what I find so telling about the kind of person that Miriam was is that God gives his description of her in the book of the prophet Micah because in Micah chapter 6 the Lord is reminding the people of Israel of his wonderful work of salvation they've been disobedient to the Lord but the Lord is reminding them of what he did to them in the past and what he did for them and the Lord says I brought you up from the land of Egypt I redeemed you from the house of bondage and I sent before you Moses Aaron and Miriam and I think this is wonderful that Miriam is mentioned here because women were often marginalized in this room they weren't mentioned whether they were considered as second class or second rate in comparison to men or ignored completely and especially in comparison to her younger brother
Miriam's ministry to women may have been thought of as insignificant because Moses he was the leader of God's people he was the leader of over two million people going from Egypt to the promised land Aaron he was the high priest he was the man who stood before God in the day of atonement to make atonement for God's people and they both held high positions of prominence but what we see in Micah 6 is that God's description of Miriam highlights that her position and her actions they were noted she wasn't a prominent figure in the eyes of people and not a lot is written about her but in the eyes of God Miriam was a key figure in the work of redemption I brought you up from the land of Egypt I redeemed you from the house of bondage and I sent before you Moses Aaron and Miriam and you know my friend
[32:17] I said it earlier but I'll say it again the Lord needs Miriams the Lord needs Miriams to play their part in the work of redemption salvation because the Lord doesn't just ask us to make a name for ourselves and take the prominent positions like Moses and Aaron but the Lord does ask us he does ask us to be devoted to the cause of Christ and witness for Christ the Lord does ask us to be devoted people of God to look out for those who are younger in the faith the Lord does ask us to encourage those who are weak and downcast and seek to meet them at the point of their need and yes we aren't perfect like Miriam we will be disobedient and make many mistakes but wouldn't it be wonderful that we were known to the Lord as those who were used by the Lord and as insignificant and as weak and as small as we may feel is it not our heart's desire that the

Lord would use us and bring others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ because that if we could say one thing that was Miriam's desire that was Miriam's desire so there we have Miriam this little glimpse of Miriam we've seen Miriam's devotion Miriam's dance Miriam's disobedience and then in Micah 6 we have Miriam's description but only a few verses after Miriam's description in Micah 6 we're given the ingredients to be a Miriam because the Lord says this is what the Lord requires of you to do justly to love mercy and to walk humbly before your God this is what the Lord requires of you to do justly to love mercy and to walk humbly before your
God so may we all seek to learn from Miriam's example and be a devoted daughter or son of the King may the Lord bless these thoughts let us pray O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for thy word we thank thee O Lord that thy people are those who may not have been known to many others throughout the world but they were known to thee they were known for their faithfulness and for their diligence they were known because of their love to towards the Lord and help us Lord we pray thee O to be known to thee for our love and our diligence and our worship of thee help us Lord to walk humbly before thee help us we pray to serve thee aright Lord enable us we ask to be the servants of the Lord that thou hast called us to be to tell it to the generation following that this God is our God and he will be our guide even unto death
O Lord bless us we pray remember our homes and our families remember our loved ones we ask that thou wouldst undertake for us especially those that know thee not all that they would come to trust in the one who is the king of kings and the lord of lords do us good then we pray go before us for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake amen we shall conclude by singing in psalm 119 psalm 119 that's in the scottish psalter page 414 singing from verse 165 down to the verse marked 168 psalm 119 verse 165 to 168 great peace have they who love thy law offence they shall have none I hoped for thy salvation lord and thy commands have done my soul thy testimonies pure observed carefully on them my heart is set and them I love exceedingly thy testimonies and thy laws I kept with special care for all my works and ways each one before thee open are these verses in conclusion to God's praise praise for all salvation CONGREGATION

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[38:04] CONGREGATION CONGREGATION CONGREGATION CONGREGATION CONGREGATION CONGREGATION CONGREGATION CONGREGATION CONGREGATION CONGREGATION before the open light.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.

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