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Now a new king arose over Egypt, who didn't know Joseph. Many generations had passed since Joseph had been sent to Egypt in enslavement after his brothers sold him. Many generations had passed since the famine, since Joseph had saved all of Egypt from starvation. Many generations had passed since Joseph's brothers had reconciled with him and come to settle in Egypt with Joseph, as special guests of Pharaoh.

This was a new day, and a new Pharaoh. A Pharaoh who didn't know Joseph.

To this Pharaoh, the Israelites are not the descendants of Joseph, Pharaoh's ancestor's right hand person and savior of the land. To this Pharaoh, these foreigners are just a potential rival, a threat, a people to be exploited and subdued and killed.

So Pharaoh enslaves the Israelites and gives them hard labor. But this isn't enough for him. Pharaoh gives orders, first to the midwives, and then to all the people. Kill all the Israelite boys.

Why have you allowed the boys to live? Pharaoh asks the midwives. They answer, the Hebrew women give birth so fast, we can't even get there to do the delivery! In other words, they lie. There is a web of lies in fact, that allow baby Moses to live and to grow up safely despite Pharaoh's genocidal decrees. Moses' mother hides her baby. Then she sends him in a basket down the river. Miriam, Moses' sister, looks out for him.

Pharaoh's own daughter is in on the conspiracy. Does she know about her father's order to kill Israelite babies? Of course she knows! Does she realize that the baby's own mother is the one nursing the baby? Probably she does.

Shiprah, Puah, Moses' mother, Miriam, and Pharaoh's daughter. Five women resist Pharaoh's evil plan. Five women protect baby Moses, protect Moses, who will grow up and free his people.

Now, do you think the midwives are afraid of Pharaoh? Probably yes. Do you think Moses' mother, and Moses' sister Miriam are afraid of Pharaoh? Probably yes. Do you think Pharaoh's own daughter is maybe even afraid of her father? Yeah, probably she is. They are probably all afraid, but they do not obey his orders. They are probably all afraid, but they resist anyway.

Why do these five women overcome their fear, refuse to obey, resist Pharaoh's commands?

The text tells us that the midwives fear God. They fear God. They are in awe and wonder of God, more awe and wonder and fear than they have for the powerful human Pharaoh. The midwives know who Pharaoh is, and they know who God is. If Pharaoh's commands and God's commands are in conflict, they know which commands they must follow.

Moses' mother and Miriam are Israelites who we assume know the one God and obey God's commands. Yet there is another reason for them to resist, a reason they share with Pharaoh's daughter. The reason is love. Pharaoh's daughter is moved with compassion, with love, for this vulnerable baby she doesn't even know, the same love that makes Moses' mother put Moses in the basket and makes Miriam follow him anxiously along the river.

These women know who God is. They know their own heart. And these things help them to go against the most powerful person they know, to save a baby.

This is not just an ancient tale from our holy scripture; we know this story today. A powerful king who does not know how those people got here, what they did for the whole community, does not remember they are neighbors, but makes them into enemies.

We can do it to each other, as we tragically saw with Professor Jason Arday last week, as we saw the press and other academics attack him as an undeserving outsider instead of embracing him as a colleague. We can even do it to ourselves, listening to our own inner Pharaoh and trying to hide or suppress or kill parts of ourselves we consider foreign or unacceptable.

Who do you say that I am? Jesus asks in today's Gospel. Who do you say that I am?

Peter answers powerfully and boldly, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answers Peter's bold naming, his statement of truth, by giving Peter a new name and new power. You are Peter. You are the rock. I give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus tells Peter who he is at his core, deeper to his identity than being Simon son of Jonah, deeper than being a fisherman by trade, deeper than who he has been and what he has done. You are Peter. I give you the keys.

Peter witnesses to who Jesus is, and gets affirmation of who he is. Knowing himself, and knowing Jesus, will be very important for Peter later. He will need the strength of that deep knowledge to tell about Jesus, to preach and heal and grow the kingdom and resist the Romans. Peter will give his life because he knows himself and knows Jesus. The kingdom will keep going. The Romans will not win. This is what it's all about, St Martin's. This is our spiritual journey, this is our reason for coming together. To know God. To know Jesus. To know our heart. To name our deepest truths. To hear God calling us by our most intimate, our truest name.

Jesus is asking all of us this same question right now. Who do you say that I am? Who is God? Who is Pharaoh? Who will you choose to obey? Who will you embrace? Who will you resist?

St Martin's, there are a lot of Pharaohs out there, on the news, in our communities, even inside our own heads. When we can answer Jesus' question, when we know who God is, when we know and love who we are, we will be able to resist these Pharaohs. Jesus is saying to us, You are [say your name. Say your neighbor's name]. Jesus is saying, here are the keys to the kingdom. Will you take them? Amen.