**“What Would I Have Done, What Do I Do?”**

 January 19, 2025

 We live in a world of uncertainty, and violence. The readings this morning remind us that others have lived in times of injustice and oppression. The Hebrews and the Egyptians use to live peacefully, but when the memories of this history disappeared the Egyptian king feared and ostracized the Hebrews, when he feared the growth of their populations, he enslaved them. Similar to the Egyptians, at least one of our trading partners, the USA, has forgotten our cooperative working arrangements, and how much we depend on each other. Now the new president coming into power, tomorrow morning, flexing his position of power, has been using tactical moves and words to demean Canada. Trying to make us seem lesser than they are as a country, as citizens, and economical partners. It would appear, that we do not learn the lessons from past histories. There are so many examples of this kind of treatment of others throughout history.

In the Exodus reading this morning we hear of a ruler who fears the Israelites because they seem to be populating quicker than the Egyptians. The Egyptians did everything they could to crush the spirits of the Hebrews, by enslaving them. The king and others were motivated by a rhetoric of Egyptian Replacement Theory all too readily comparable to our current day’s white supremacist White Replacement Theory, the King led a campaign to murder all newborn Hebrew males. Then the king of Egypt decided to call upon two midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, and require them to murder all the newborn boys. It is said that these two women feared God more than they did the king and they did not kill the newborn boys. They knew it was dangerous to go against the king’s orders but acted against them anyway. The king called on them to see why they disobeyed his orders. They told him that the Hebrew women were different than the Egyptian women, they told the king, the Hebrew women birthed their babies easier and faster, therefore the babies were born before the midwives could get there for the births. But the king eventually told his people to “Take every newborn Hebrew boy and throw them into the Nile” river. This king forgot how to live lovingly and justly with others. This story is an example of how domination and oppression creep up and occur. First we have to create the enemy, and put fear into others about losing power, wealth, etc. It would seem that we believe “What we fear, we must dominate” at all costs, even at the cost of innocent lives.

In the Mark reading Jesus is warning us about taking the wrong path, no matter how tempting the rewards may seem at the time. He warns us that in the end the payment for doing wrong is forever. As tough as it is to do good, especially when the short-term benefits may seem too tempting to ignore, Jesus tells us, that at the end of the day we need to remember that there will be a price to pay. We have a choice; to do good or to do evil. What will our choices be? We should always be asking ourselves “What should I, or will I do today, that will lead me to live into what the Holy Mystery requires of me”.

Monday January 27, 2025 will be Holocaust Memorial Day, it is the day of remembrance of the six million Jews, and millions of other people murdered by the Nazi’s, during the Holocaust. The theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 is **“For A Better Future”.** What will it take for us to create and sustain a better future?

Many of us have heard of stories during the time of the Holocaust when people, like you and I, made the hard, but the right choices, and saved lives of innocent people. Here are three very quick examples of those who risked their lives to help others. First is the Scottish missionary [Jane Haining](https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/haining.html), whom you will probably hear more about next week, who refused to leave the Jewish girls in her care in Budapest and who died in Auschwitz- Birkenau. Then there was Oskar Schindler, made famous the world over through Spielberg’s film “[Schindler’s List](https://www.google.com/search?q=schindler%27s+list+plot&sca_esv=1c47a0ef9a66e03a&rlz=1C5CHFA_enCA1040CA1043&sxsrf=ADLYWIKCjuBYGUSWcV3OBUXauk5Ok6bpPg%3A1737046836993&ei=NDuJZ-WqPPybptQPt7SniAg&oq=schindlers+list&gs_lp=Egxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAiD3NjaGluZGxlcnMgbGlzdCoCCAMyDRAuGIAEGLEDGIMBGAoyBxAuGIAEGAoyBxAAGIAEGAoyBxAAGIAEGAoyBxAAGIAEGAoyBxAAGIAEGAoyBxAAGIAEGAoyBxAuGIAEGAoyBxAAGIAEGAoyBxAAGIAEGApI5mZQAFiQKXAAeAGQAQCYAasBoAHiEKoBBDAuMTW4AQHIAQD4AQGYAhSgAsbHAcICBBAjGCfCAg0QLhjHARgnGI4FGK8BwgIKEC4YgAQYQxiKBcICDRAuGIAEGEMY1AIYigXCAgoQABiABBhDGIoFwgIKEC4YgAQYJxiKBcICDhAAGIAEGLEDGIMBGIoFwgIREC4YgAQYsQMY0QMYgwEYxwHCAgsQLhiABBjRAxjHAcICFxAuGIAEGIoFGJcFGNwEGN4EGOAE2AEBwgINEC4YgAQYsQMYQxiKBcICCxAAGIAEGLEDGIMBwgIQEC4YgAQYsQMYQxjUAhiKBcICCBAAGIAEGLEDwgILEC4YgAQYsQMYgwHCAgUQABiABMICDRAuGIAEGMcBGAoYrwHCAigQLhiABBixAxiDARgKGJcFGNwEGN4EGOAEGPQDGPEDGPUDGPYD2AEBmAMAugYGCAEQARgUkgcIMC4xNS45LTWgB5ieAg&sclient=gws-wiz-serp)”, The story is about a Businessman, Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson), who arrives in Krakow in 1939, ready to make his fortune from World War II, which has just started. After joining the Nazi party primarily for political expediency, he staffs his factory with Jewish workers for similarly pragmatic reasons. When the SS begins exterminating Jews in the Krakow ghetto, Schindler arranges to have his workers protected to keep his factory in operation, but soon realizes that in so doing, he is also saving 1200 innocent Jewish lives.

And then there is Nicholas Winton whose story of heroic action in saving the lives of 664 children from Czechoslovakia was generally unknown until 50 years later when he was reunited with some of these children through the BBC’s That’s Life programme, a powerful national moment in the UK. His story of the “kindertransport” was made into a film, [One Life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Life_%282023_film%29), which was released in 2023.

Each of these people, and many others whose stories we will never know, answered the question “What do I do?” through their compassionate action to make a difference, to stand with the innocents, to do what they could to save them when they realised what was happening. For Jane Haining, her action cost her her own life.

But then on the flip side there were people, just like you and I, who made different choices, choices that caused death. At times choices are not easy, but as Jesus warns we must realize the payment for choosing wrongly, is forever. The reality is that even since WW11, atrocities have continued to happen in countries that many of us may have never even have heard of. We just don’t seem to learn from our mistakes. History tends to repeat itself because we are either slow learners, or greedy, or maybe even a combination of both.

Choices come with risk, are we courageous enough to be like the midwives, Jane Haining, Oskar Schindler and Nicholas Winton. In the end a world of peace and justice will depend on people like you and I, remembering the bravery of people from the past, and what God calls us to be, and to do. Let’s continue to ask ourselves “What Do I Do?” And as we ask this let us remember the quote, attributed to Edmund Burke, an Irish political Philosopher, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” What will be your choice/s?

I have asked that the letters from the Midwives be provided for all. Please take these home and read them. Figure out what you would do, write it down and pass it in next week (in the collection plate if you so choose). You can be anonymous as you wish. Please return your responses to this letter and I will work them into prayers over the few weeks. Thank you for this. Now with that, May all God’s children say Amen!