**As Brave as Miriam**

Miriam is another character about which very little is known. She is one of five women referred to as prophet within the Hebrew Bible (Old testament) but there is no indication as to why this title was bestowed upon her. Though Micah (6:4) does mention her alongside Moses and Aaron as being sent before the Israelites to lead them and unlike other women who seem to fade into non-existence when they’re part is done, Miriam’s death is recorded (Numbers 20:1).

*Exodus 2*

She is often believed to be the sister who watched over Moses when he was floated in a basket on the river Nile (Numbers 26:59). She watched her brother who should have been killed being found by the pharaoh’s daughter approached her and asked if she should fetch a nurse (Moses’ mother). A brave action indeed considering Miriam herself cannot have been much more than a child herself.

*Exodus 15:1-21*

*21 And Miriam sang to them:*

*“Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.”*

Women seem to have held the exclusive responsibility for singing victory songs after an Israelite triumph in holy war and this doesn’t seem to be any different. Whilst most bibles claim only verses 20-21 with Miriam’s name, there are those that think this whole section is likely to be Miriam’s song. Does it take bravery to sing a song of praise after a battle? Could it be seen as a taunt to the enemy? A challenge or warning to other foes?

*Numbers 12*

This is the longest reference to Miriam we have in the bible, but it doesn’t shine her in the best light. We have heard that according to Micah she was appointed with Moses and Aaron to go before the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness, and without this passage we could be forgiven for thinking the relationship between the three of them was peaceful. Alas that is not the case, Aaron and Miriam are concerned with the “outsider” Moses marries and speak against him. God doesn’t respond well and Miriam becomes leprous and holds up the Israelites progress by a week whilst she is cast out of the camp for a week in punishment for her speaking out against Moses’ leadership. Why do you think Aaron is not punished? Miriam is not then mentioned again until her death in chapter 20, which leaves me with so many questions. What position does she return to in camp? Is she still a prophet? Does she still have a friendship with Moses and Aaron? Regardless I think there is a bravery in facing up to your mistakes and seeking reconciliation rather than simply running away.

*Bravery*

Like so many of the traits displayed in our biblical characters so far, I think there are different types of bravery. In these three passages I think Miriam has demonstrated them all. Firstly, bravery in the face of danger. What would have happened had she been connected with the baby boy in the river? Especially if another Egyptian had found him? In watching over her brother, she was standing against the law, the pharaoh, and the whole Egyptian way of life.

Then bravery in singing. Having shown bravery against the Egyptian way of life in singing praise to God after the Israelites escape, she is singing in a new way of life. One that is submitted to God and God alone. Whilst not everyone will sing in a new way of life in literal song, we do all (realised or not) sing a song of being as we live our lives. What do you think your life song would say about you? What you hold most dear? Why not try asking one or two people who know you what they think your way of living says about you?

Finally, bravery in reconciliation. We have all done it haven’t we, said something we shouldn’t and fallen out with them? Sometimes it goes further than that we damage relationships through other means. The law punishes those that break it because they have damaged their relationship with society, betrayed its trust. It is a sad fact that many who do serious time in prison find it easier to be re-convicted than to face up to reintegration in society, and that society often struggles with those trying to reintegrate. Repairing the damage caused is much harder than simply remaining separate, but God’s justice includes reconciliation. I believe a great many of today’s leaders could learn a lot from Miriam’s example

**Questions**

1. Can you think of examples of when you or others have stood up against corrupt laws, systems or governments?
2. What way of life are we (the church) trying to establish? How does your life song fit within that?
3. Do you need to face the pain or difficulty of reconciliation with a person or group?
4. If you had to choose one of the above ‘types’ of bravery for our time now which would you choose and why?