

February 16th, 2020

The Story – What's Next

“Wandering”

Pastor's Notes

Good morning it is great to see each and every one of you. How are you all today?

Well we are continuing on our quest to go through the entire bible this year in roughly 31 weeks. We are following the book THE STORY which you can order at Guest Services. It is a pretty easy read if you struggle with all the these, thows, and those in the Bible this simplifies it a bit for you.

Now we are not preaching straight through 31 weeks we do take a few weeks off here and there to fill up the rest of the year...

But if you were ever interested in everything in the bible this year is the time to do it here at Innovation...

Each week we are doing a chapter from THE STORY. When Pastor Billy asked me to do Wandering. Man did I get excited. It's about Moses and I thought what can I do to get every ones attention...

Part the Red Sea.....

Change a staff or in my case this cane into a snake.....

How bout the burning bush right here on stage....fire officials said no to that,,,,,man they know how to kill a great event....

What a show that would have been.....

Unfortunately for my mind I wasn't preaching about those spectacular things I am preaching about Wandering which in this case is about the 40 years that the Israelites' took to get to the promised land....

The way to our promised land is not always easy, in fact, it rarely is. But it's worth it.

Let me tell you the story about this...Put yourself there and imagine this if you can. You have just been led out of Egypt....it was a long trek...but you saw the power of God as the Red sea was parted for your escape. God didn't forget about you. He split the sea in two so that you as his people could walk through on dry ground. The enemy in hot pursuit had no idea what they were up against. They lost the battle that day and were swallowed up in the waves.

God will make a way where there doesn't seem to be a way.

God had rescued you and led you straight through the biggest obstacle you have ever encountered, and that was just the beginning of his miracles.

Eventually you stop near Mt Sani For a period you just stay in the same place. Can you envision the place with a camp just below a large Mountain with a lot of dust and dirt around. It wasn't an oasis it was more of a dungeon. Hot during the day, and chilly to cold at night. It doesn't take long and people start to grumble about their surroundings. Remember this about these former slaves. While slaves they had food, water the basic necessities to keep them alive to work for the king...but they didn't have freedom. Now they have freedom but it isn't what they think it should be.... Haven't we all been in this place... Oh I don't have this or that but I forget what I do have. They have forgotten about their God. The one that saved them and gave them freedom...They complain about water and God provides, they complain about food and God provides with manna. Some of them even start to pray to another God...

They are not grateful for what they have, we all seem to think it should be better from time to time....well what is better for them...freedom but you have to get things for yourself to survive....or a slaves life where some of your needs are taken care of....

In the book of Exodus, you can read the story of how God's people had endured years of bondage under the Egyptians. They were oppressed, abused, mistreated people. They needed rescue, they needed a way of escape. God saw their need, he didn't miss a thing, and in his perfect timing, he acted on their behalf. Miracle after miracle God performed, leading them straight out of slavery, away from the cruel hand of the Egyptians. He set them free. Free from oppression. Free from captivity. Free from bondage. And the adventure was just getting started.

God will lead us day and night.

Eventually they begin their journey to the promised land... the land of milk and honey... "By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light..." Exodus 13:21

God never left his people alone in their journey. His presence was always there, a reminder to them that they hadn't been left on their own in the wilderness. As a pillar of cloud in the day and fire by night, He guided them, giving them shade from the fierceness of the desert sun, and a light in the darkest of nights. This is a struggle that many people face at least one time or another in life: a reluctance to try something new, to veer off into uncharted territory, to stray from our comfort zones, all at the risk of traveling a path that is less familiar or comfortable

God will not leave us to fend for ourselves, struggling to find our way. He will lead us. He promises to be faithful. We may not see him in a pillar of cloud or fire these days, but we have his Word, and the Holy Spirit to give guidance to our days. He is with us, he gives wisdom, he provides direction, so we never have to fear being left on our own to figure things out. He goes ahead of us, he walks with us, and he guards our way from behind. His Word gives truth and life, it shows us the way to walk in this world.

The people of Israel spent 40 years in the desert. 40 years of wandering. 40 years of journeying towards the promised land that God had given them. That's a very long time. The days must have been intense, hot, dry, I'm sure they got weary. But God met them where they were, he made sure they had what they needed. They learned through every hard and grueling step, how much they had to rely on Him.

Why 40 years why 40 days...what does 40 mean to us in the bible

The number 40 is mentioned 146 times in Scripture, the number 40 generally symbolizes a period of testing, trial or probation. Also, notice each period ends with a time or item of blessing.

God flooded the earth by having it rain for forty days and nights (Genesis 7:12).

During Moses' life he lived forty years in Egypt and forty years in the desert before God selected him to lead his people out of slavery.

Moses was also on Mount Sinai for 40 days and nights, on two separate occasions (Exodus 24:18, 34:1 - 28), receiving God's laws. He also sent spies, for forty days to investigate the land God promised the Israelites as an inheritance (Numbers 13:25, 14:34).

The number forty can also represent a generation of man. Because of their sins after leaving Egypt, God swore that the generation of Israelites who left Egyptian bondage would not enter their inheritance in Canaan (Deuteronomy 1). So the children of Israel were punished by wandering the wilderness for 40 years before a new generation was allowed to possess the promised land.

Jesus was tempted by the devil many times during the 40 days and nights he fasted just before his ministry began. He also appeared to his disciples and others for 40 days after his resurrection from the dead.

Other Appearances of the number forty

Abraham tried to bargain with God to not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if forty righteous people were found (Genesis 18:29).

The prophet Ezekiel laid on His right side for 40 days to symbolize Judah's sins (Ezekiel 4:6).

God provides in miraculous ways

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I will rain down bread from heaven for you...' Exodus 16:4

"Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." Exodus 17:6

They were hungry. God sent manna every day for 40 years. They were thirsty he provided every day as God sent water gushing from a rock. Every day a miracle was right before their eyes. They just had to pick up the manna, drink the water, accept the blessing. Another time he made the bitter waters sweet again, so they could drink. When they asked for meat he filled the valley with quail so all could have at least ten. Over and over, God provided for their needs.

Sin will always take us farther than we want to go.

Grumbling, complaining, sin, hearts far away from God – these things were far too common for the Israelites in these desert wandering years. And often like us, they lost sight of how far sin could carry them down the road we never wished to go. God had great mercy over them for all those years, they tested him even after he graciously provided for all their needs and offered them protection and strength.

"I have seen these people, 'the Lord said to Moses, 'and they are a stiff-necked people...' Exodus 32:9

How easily we often forget. What starts as complaining, grumbling, hearts going astray, leads us deeper into pathways we wished we'd never entered. Sin gets ahold of our minds and hearts. It's like a disease we can't shake off on our own strength. But God, in his mercy, forgives and sets free. He redeems us from the pit that far too many of us have wandered into and been stuck in. He lifts us out and places our feet on solid ground. He gives us fresh purpose and hope

We may feel forgotten and left on our own, but God is always with us.

Even after all these things the Israelites had done, and how they'd wandered away from God, he said these words just a few verses later, "The Lord replied, 'My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'" Exodus 33:14

God's presence is powerful and strong. It is never dependent on how good we are, he is faithful even in our hardest struggles. Only in him can true rest and peace be found. The years of desert wanderings must have been difficult to endure. 40 years is a very long time. But God doesn't always work on our timetable. And he saw them through to the end. He never abandoned his people. They kept pressing through and God continued to be with them, and he is with us as well

The hardest struggles we face have the greatest potential to teach us patience and endurance."

We often face battles and problems that press hard. We feel forgotten, all alone. And yet the hardest struggles we face have the greatest potential to teach us patience and endurance, like nothing else can. The years of our own "desert wanderings" may prove to be our most power-packed, strengthening, faith-building time of life, but we may not fully recognize it until after we've passed through.

And sometimes when we find ourselves there, we just need that reminder from the whispers of God down deep in our soul, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest..."

In whatever you're facing, be assured, God is with you, he's providing for your needs, he has a plan, and nothing is too difficult for him.

The God of miracles fights for you today, and he will never let you go.

Bible reads.....Exodus and Numbers