

Rivers in the Wilderness

May 16th, 2021 | Pastor Cameron Brice

- “Yahweh is the one who makes a way in the sea, a pathway in the mighty waters. He destroyed chariots and horses and all their mighty warriors they fell, never to rise again — gone forever, snuffed out like a wick. This is what he says: “Stop dwelling on the past. Don’t even remember these former things. I am doing something brand new, something unheard of, even now it sprouts and grows and matures. Don’t you perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and open up flowing streams in the desert. Wild beasts, jackals, and owls will glorify me. For I supply streams of water in the desert and rivers in the wilderness to satisfy the thirst of my people, my chosen ones, so that you, whom I have shaped and formed for myself, will proclaim my praise.” - **Isaiah 43:16-21 (TPT)**
- A few things to note about the context of this passage before we move on:
 - The first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah is an account of God addressing Israel’s “adulterous” relationships with other nations and their gods.
 - Believing in a different god in this period of history, was to worship that god through practicing sin. These sins ranged anywhere from drunken orgies to child sacrifice.
 - All throughout chapters one to thirty-nine God insistently calls for Israel to repent, serve and return to Him, but Israel stubbornly refused.
 - Their rebellion and disobedience landed them in captivity to suffer the consequences of their wrong. They were taken from their homeland of Israel and marched to Babylon where they lived as captives and slaves to the Babylonians.
 - However, even in the midst of their sin, wrongdoing and captivity God had a plan of rescue for His people. He hints at this plan throughout the beginning thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah but really unfolds it in chapters forty through sixty-six.
 - It is important to note that God tells of Israel’s future redemption and restoration in the midst of their captivity. They were still suffering the consequences of their disobedience, and still had not fully surrendered back to God. Nevertheless, He shows them that He Himself is going to lead them out of slavery and back into freedom.

- He starts in chapter forty, by telling them that He is going to bless them with twice as much then what they had lost while in captivity.
- Chapter forty-one, He tells them how He is going to help them in their trouble.
- In chapter forty-two, He shows them how He is going to save them from, Babylon, the nation that has kept them in captivity.
- Here, in chapter forty-three, God draws an interesting comparison between their rescue from Babylon and their rescue from Egypt.
 - As God was rescuing the Children of Israel from Egypt, they found themselves faced with the Red Sea crossing. Here, in verse sixteen of chapter forty-three, God reminds the children of Israel of that miracle:
 - “Yahweh is the one who makes a way in the sea, a pathway in the mighty waters. He destroyed chariots and horses and all their mighty warriors fell, never to rise again — gone forever, snuffed out like a wick...” - **Isaiah 43:16-17 (TPT)**
 - But, God gives a very interesting command to His people after reminding them of how He set them free from Egypt:
 - “Stop dwelling on the past. Don’t even remember these former things.” - **Isaiah 43:18 (TPT)**
 - Why would God remind His people of the miracles He worked in the past, only to tell them not to remember what He did in the past?
- The reason for this is pretty fascinating. When Israel was rescued from Egypt, geographically speaking, what stood between them, and their total freedom was the Red Sea.
 - But now, what stood between them and being free from Babylon was a vast desert.
 - This means that the way God was going to rescue them from Babylon would require a new miracle. It was going to take something totally unique from the way He set them free from Egypt.
 - That is why He tells them this in verse 19:
 - “I am doing something brand new, something unheard of, even now it sprouts and grows and matures. Don’t you perceive it? I will make a way in

the wilderness and open up flowing streams in the desert.” - **Isaiah 43:19 (TPT)**

- God didn't want them stuck, waiting for Him to respond to their current situation, the same way He did in the past. Israel was facing new challenges, they needed a new way, and they needed a different miracle.
- I think this is a vastly important reality for us to understand in the current place that we as a community now sit.
 - All throughout last year, in the middle of the pandemic, God was speaking about where He is taking us...
 - We've been talking about the coming harvest of souls, we've been talking about revival, and we've been talking about things God is going to do.
 - We, as a church, have been in this place before. Our history is full of stories of miracles and revival. We have seen it, we are seeing it happen, and we are going to see it grow again.
 - In order to do this, we can't expect God to do exactly what He did in the past.
 - We can't sit around waiting for a Red Sea crossing, when what we need is a way and a river in the wilderness.
- There are two specific things that I believe God wants to give to us as a family through this passage:
 1. Give us discernment.
 - “I am doing something brand new, something unheard of, even now it sprouts and grows and matures. Don't you perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and open up flowing streams in the desert.” - **Isaiah 43:19 (TPT)**
 - Discernment for what God is doing today helps us not to be boxed in by the experience of what He did yesterday.
 - Experience is not a bad thing, because God does do the same things, but He doesn't always do it the same way.
 - God had set the children of Israel free before, He had even made a way of escape through impossible situations, but the way He was going to do it this time would look different.
 - Discernment helps us to see the nuance of how God moves.

2. Give us rivers that will bring life to the wilderness.

- “For I supply streams of water in the desert and rivers in the wilderness, to satisfy the thirst of my people, my chosen ones.” - **Isaiah 43:20 (TPT)**
 - Our nation, and the nations of the world have all gone through a wilderness season over this last year. We are still recovering, and God wants us to be a part of the rivers that He is going to use to satisfy anyone who has become thirsty for Him.
 - He is going to give us rivers of financial provision, worship, and revival.