The LORD Is My Banner” — Yahweh-Nissi

“Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner.” — **Exodus 17:15 (NIV)**

The Hebrew expression is **YHWH Nissi** (יְהוָה נִסִּי), often pronounced **YAH-way NEE-see**.
The important Hebrew word is **נֵס — *nēs***, pronounced approximately **“nace.”** It means a **banner, standard, signal, or rallying point**—something lifted up so people could see it and gather around it.

1. A Banner identified whose army you belonged to

In the ancient world, banners or standards could identify a people or military force. Soldiers could look toward the standard and know where they belonged and around whom they were gathered.

So when Moses says:
“The LORD is my Banner,”

He is essentially declaring:
“We belong to the LORD.”

Israel's identity was not ultimately found in Moses or Joshua. They were the people of Yahweh.
That gives you a strong sermon connection:

Before the banner tells you where you're going, it tells you whose you are.
For the Christian, our identity begins with belonging to Christ.

2. The Banner was a rallying point

Imagine the confusion of an ancient battlefield: noise, dust, people moving in different directions.
A raised standard gave soldiers something visible around which they could rally.
They could look toward it and know:

“That's where my people are. That's where I need to go.”

Moses' declaration therefore carries the idea that **the LORD was the One around whom Israel rallied.**
That fits beautifully with what had just happened.
Joshua was in the valley. Moses was on the hill. Aaron was on one side. Hur was on the other.
The soldiers were spread across the battlefield.
They were doing different things in different places.

But they were all serving the same God and participating in the same mission.
That's a tremendous picture of the church.

We have different gifts. Different ministries. Different personalities. Different responsibilities. But there is only **one Banner** (Jesus Christ)

3. The Banner represented the One who gave them victory

This may be the most important part. After the battle, Moses did **not** build an altar called:
“Moses Is a Great Leader.”

He did not call it:
“Joshua Is a Great Warrior.”

He didn't even call it:
“Aaron and Hur Are Great Servants.”

He called it:
“THE LORD is my Banner.”

Why?

Because Moses understood something: **Everyone participated in the battle, but God gave the victory.**
Joshua's sword wasn't ultimately their source of victory.
Moses' leadership wasn't their source.
Aaron and Hur's service wasn't their source.
Even the staff Moses held wasn't the source.

God was.

“Everybody needs to volunteer.”

There is a much deeper message:
We serve, but God supplies the power. We work, but God produces the fruit. We obey, but God gives the victory.

4. The banner represented God's presence among His people

There's an interesting progression in Exodus 17.

Israel faces an enemy. Joshua goes into battle.
Moses goes up the hill with **"the staff of God"** in his hands (Exodus 17:9).

Moses becomes tired.
Aaron and Hur support him.
Israel prevails.
And afterward Moses declares:

"The LORD is my Banner."

In other words, Moses doesn't walk away from the battle talking primarily about what **they** accomplished.
He walks away talking about **who God is**. (That's important.)

Sometimes after God does something significant, we focus on the method.

"We had a great program."
"We had great volunteers."
"We had a great strategy."
"We had a great service."
Those things may all be true.

Moses teaches us to look beyond the method and recognize the Source.
"The Lord did this."

5. There is an important connection between the raised staff and "The LORD Is My Banner"

During the battle, Moses stood on the hill holding **the staff of God**.
Then after the battle he declares: **"The LORD is my Banner."**

We should be careful not to say that the staff itself literally became the banner; the text doesn't explicitly say that.

But there is certainly a powerful thematic connection.
Something associated with God's authority was being **lifted up** while God's people fought below.

Afterward Moses identifies **the LORD Himself as Israel's true banner.**
So the emphasis moves:
from the staff God used → to the God who used the staff.

That's the point.
Don't worship the instrument.
Look to the One behind the instrument.

6. There is a beautiful connection to Christ

This is where I think the sermon can become especially powerful.
Isaiah uses the same Hebrew word, *nēs*, when describing a coming figure from the line of Jesse:

Isaiah 11:10 (NIV)
"In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him…"

Christ becomes the One to whom the nations rally.
So you can move from:
Exodus 17 — "The LORD is my Banner."

to:

Isaiah 11 — the Messiah will be a banner for the peoples.
And ultimately to Christ.
Jesus is the One around whom God's people gather.
Jesus is the One who gives us our identity.
Jesus is the One under whose authority we serve.
Jesus is the One toward whom we point.
And Jesus is the One who has won the ultimate victory.

The Banner Tells Us Four Things

1. The Banner tells us WHOSE WE ARE. We belong to God.

2. The Banner tells us WHERE WE RALLY. We gather around God and His purposes.

3. The Banner tells us WHO WE FOLLOW. Our allegiance is ultimately to the Lord.

4. The Banner reminds us WHO GIVES THE VICTORY. We participate, but God provides the victory.

And then bring it directly back to serving:

“Church, Aaron wasn't the banner. Hur wasn't the banner. Joshua wasn't the banner. Moses wasn't even the banner. **The LORD was their Banner.** That's why we can serve without needing recognition. That's why we can work behind the scenes. That's why we can hold somebody else's arms up. We're not trying to build our name. We're serving under His Banner.”
And then I would land the point with this:

“It doesn't matter whether you're Joshua in the valley, Moses on the hill, Aaron on one side, or Hur on the other. If we're all under the same Banner, we're all fighting the same battle, serving the same King, and working toward the same mission.”