



Tuesday Devotion: Exodus Week 12 June 16, 2020

Exodus 31

Bible Reference: Exodus 31 & Psalm 55:6-7

“And I say, ‘Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; yes, I would wander far away; I would lodge in the wilderness;’” Psalm 55:6-7

We have been calling this season of separation and sickness a wilderness. Yet in my personal reading this morning from Psalm 55, I found it interesting that David would actually put himself in a wilderness for rest. When I thought about it some more, I guess I did that too, only I was forced into the wilderness. The first wilderness kept me home, but now we are in a wilderness of our choice by staying at the lake. Being at the lake provides rest and inspiration to come back to the wilderness we were forced into.

Last week I got over ambitious and put a number of chapters together for the devotion (Exodus 29-31) but realized this week that I had something else I wanted to say about chapter 31. This chapter tells two stories: 1) about the craftsmen who, because of their great skill, were able to put artistic designs into the ark of the covenant; and 2) about keeping the Sabbath. There are amazing craftsmen who are decorating your tabernacle (Mt. Calvary) even now. Every week I enter the church and go to the cry room to check out what is new. Last week I got to look at the pavilion and see the new roof. This current week we are going through bids for the new roof on the office and Schroeder Hall. These craftsmen are skilled in changing your church and preparing us for the future.

When will you see your tabernacle again? The Board of Directors and Elders are wrestling with that question. We will also be calling you to ask your thoughts about reopening. We want to know how comfortable you feel about returning. Taking seriously the responsibility to provide a consistent and safe environment, when we do reopen we know that church will look much different. We will all have to wear masks, and we’re not sure if there will be singing or not. I don’t know yet how I feel about wearing a mask to church or looking at a group full of masks, but we have a lot of high-risk people in our congregation, and kids who don’t understand what it means to stay 6 feet away. These are all things to consider.

Currently, we are at peace with our online services and weekly communion procedures, so the Board is choosing safety. We will be watching the COVID numbers to see what happens in July, and the Board and the Elders will continue to talk about reopening possibilities in August, working to make sure we are prepared and at peace with new steps and procedures. Regardless

of when we come back, they have decided to provide an online version of the service from here on out. As your pastor, I am at peace with these decisions.

Many have argued that the church is being persecuted. I, too, have had strong feelings on this at times. But to me, persecution is almost always a life or death situation. I also see it as putting people in jail for meeting together, but not for safety reasons. If restaurants are being treated the same way as we are as a church, then I'm not sure this can be considered persecution.

The second part of Exodus 31 is all about the Sabbath. I know that meeting together is important, but you can feel peace that we still have a Sabbath, even if it is an online service and drive up communion. I know it takes more work to make the Sabbath sacred. I am making extra efforts at my house to do more Bible times with my kids and make them special using the Action Bible and other things. I encourage you to find ways to make the Sabbath special. Don't miss the opportunity to read and talk about Jesus in your household. Part of what got me out of my slump was reading through the Psalms. Today I shared with you a portion of the Psalm I read this morning. Even in the wilderness, your staff looks forward to helping you celebrate the Sabbath by preparing the service and communion for you. This past Sunday we even cheered when we got the sound right and we made it through a service with no mistakes! We take great joy in bringing you worship to the best of our ability and we will continue to do that, whether online or in person with new rules.

I am praying for you!

God's Peace,
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