**July 19, 2020 James Sabbath: Moving from Striving to Thriving**

This season of Sabbath, 40 days of looking for Sabbath rest, is not something we do once a week but this rest is a lifestyle. When we enter into communion with God then we can experience Sabbath rest.

School conversations are happening because of the uncertainty about what is ahead. There is a purpose for us living in this period of time - God chose our lives to be lived in these days.

**Psalm 139:16** *You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in Your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.* God has purpose for us and God does everything with purpose. Especially in these times of uncertainty, God has a purpose. In our own confusion and our grasping for understanding, there is purpose. These days remind us of the words of Mordicai in the book of Esther. **Esther 4:14** *And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?*

* Uncertainty coupled with striving produces anxiety.
* Hope coupled with provision brings about peace.
* Hope comes when we trust in what is faithful.

**Hebrews 4:9-11** *So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.*

Deliverance of God is not just moving us out but moving us to something. Israel, at their deliverance out of Egypt, was focused on their deliverance but not on the destination. They had a lack of faith in God's provision. **Exodus 14:10-11** *As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the son of Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt?* Israel had its first opportunity for faith after leaving Egypt and facing the Red Sea. In **Exodus 14:13-14**Moses tells them, *"do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians who you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent."*

Striving looks like noise - having to do something for God. Israel left Egypt singing and rejoicing. Then that quickly turns to sorrow and grumbling. And God tells them to be still and see the deliverance that is at hand. The Red Sea parted, over 1 million people crossed on dry ground, and as the last person was across the sea, the sea returned to kill the enemy.

While you keep silent – He will fight for you. They didn’t have to build a dam for the Red Sea. It simply required obedience to follow what God spoke to them. But Israel never fully bought into the plan God had for them. They continued to worship idols like the golden calf.

Isn’t it easy to write ourselves out of things of the scripture? We say we haven't really built any idols today but idols are anything that steals our affection for God - jobs, relationships, desire for wealth, kids, sports, or anything that takes our focus off of God. Israel was seeking something tangible. They rejected God's rest. The desert was never their destination. Like today's struggles, it’s easy to lose sight of the destination when we are overwhelmed, but today's struggles and tomorrow's challenges are not our destination.

**Psalm 23:4** *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.* The valley of the shadow of death is in all of our stories. The promise of God’s presence will overwhelm any circumstance we will walk in and we can rest.

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**Psalm 23:5** *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.* In the midst of our struggles, trials, and in the presence of our accusers, God sits us at His table and pours out His best. He begins anointing – with gladness, with the Holy Spirit, and all of who He is.

That is true Sabbath - when we come to a place in the midst of our valleys, trials, circumstances (not when we are free from those things but in the midst) and are seated at the table of God's provision then He will anoint us with His power and Holy Spirit to give us rest. We experience the peace that comes when we are seated at His table of provision. An entire generation of Israelites died in the desert because of not resting in God’s provision.

* Striving robs us of Sabbath. Striving takes us out of what God is trying to do and it focuses us on our own doing.
* Thriving comes through obedience to God.

In all of His mercy, and for such a time as this, God will provide rest. In moments of desperation, walking through deserts and valleys, we need this kind of rest - to lay down our efforts, turn over our fears and trust Him. It’s not a place free of struggle but He will seat us at His provision.

The desert wasn’t the Israelites destination but the desert contained His provision. For 40 years, day after day, God's provision was with them. Israel settled and too many times believers today settle. No matter what we walk through or what decisions we face, God’s provision is there now.

God's table is prepared and He bids us come and sit in the midst of our striving and constant feeling of being overwhelmed. Accept what He can offer today – His presence and His peace - a peace that comes when we lay down our efforts and receive His rest.

Confess and believe and He will come in and be Lord, will redeem us, and give us a place in His Kingdom. Then eternity is secure. If you want to be at the table now and know that your final destination is to be with Jesus, then here is a prayer to give your life to Jesus:

*Dear Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe that on that cross You took my guilt, my sin, and my shame and You died for it. You faced hell for me, so I wouldn't have to. And You rose again to give me a place in Heaven, a purpose on Earth, and a relationship with Your Father. Today, Lord Jesus, I turn from my sins to be born again. And now, God is my Father, Jesus is my Savior, The Holy Spirit is my Helper. And Heaven is my home. Amen.*

What fills your days with thoughts and worry of tomorrow?

Are you consumed with what is going on around the world? about things that we cannot change?

What is your desert? How can you be assured that it is not your destination?

What practical things do you do to lean into God’s provision and take the focus off of your circumstances?