

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

Into And Out Of The Wilderness

By Ken Woodley

There are very few true wildernesses left in the world. At least not within easy reach of us here in Appomattox County.

Unless you count the one we hold in the palm of our hand. My smartphone makes the world around me seem more and more of a wilderness every day. I am bombarded by words, images and sounds that make me feel surrounded by madness.

Existence can feel like one huge Tower of Babble and the babbling is filled with dissonance, self-righteousness, division and hate. Love is hardly ever tweeted.

The world can make us feel like the Canada geese I saw early this morning, flying overhead in a perfect V only to become suddenly discombobulated and muddled, as if they no longer knew how to fly at all.

I've felt like that. We all have.

That's why God gave us these words and the promise they make, the promise that God will keep:

“...I will make a way in the wilderness...”

The wildernesses most of us face in our lifetime are those occasions that make us feel lost and alone. Whether it's the loss of a job, an illness, the death of a loved one...or a difficult memory, life is full of wilderness moments that turn our lives into a tangled maze.

Such occasions create wilderness feelings inside us and that is where we often get lost. Thankfully, God is there to help us through such times. “...I will make a way in the wilderness,” God promises me, and promises you through the prophet Isaiah.

As important as those eight words are, the words that come before them hold the key to following God out of the wilderness in which we are lost and wandering. Especially if there is something deep in our lives that we find troubling, something perhaps even years ago that still creates wilderness moments in our otherwise orderly and civilized lives.

“Do not remember the former things,” God urges us, “or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”

Those are words that provide us with an internal and eternal map through our wilderness moments and through the violently crazy world around us. They are words that blaze a trail to what is, in truth, a “promised land” that God offers us all, one that abounds with love and grace.

Don’t dwell on hurts and pains and sorrows, God is telling us. Don’t believe the babble all around you. God can speak through the static of a twittering world.

So, have faith in that new thing that God is about to do.

Like the leaves that will soon be budding on the trees and the daffodils dotting the landscape, what God promises will spring up. It can spring up now in the deepest part of ourselves that the wilderness cannot reach, the place that only God can find.

God is marking the trail through our trials and tribulations. Journey with faith in that guiding love and grace. It has the power to actually transform the wilderness, itself, giving us rivers in the desert and love so magnificent and huge that no tweet, text or email could ever contain or defeat it.

Then, like those Canada geese, we can gather ourselves and keep on flying where the Holy Spirit guides our wings.

So, take that smartphone and Google “Amazing Grace.”

Or, instead:

Be still. Be quiet. And listen to the melody God is singing inside you.