

Sharing Thoughts on the Desert/Mountain Picture

I'd first like to thank Pastor Barry for this opportunity to share a word concerning the church and journeying through a spiritual desert. I will begin by sharing a word I received over the course of a number of months, and then share a bit about what I feel God is wanting us to understand.

For context though, I need to begin with a word I received in 2017. I had a vision of God hovering over the city of Vancouver. I saw Him observing Redemption Church and watching. He wanted to visit the church in the city, and He was waiting to see if our church would be one of them. He had not "decided" if it would be us as this would depend upon how we would respond to Him. There was a chance that He would pass us by and plan his outpouring on another congregation if we were not able to respond to Him wholeheartedly. "His eye is on Redemption", is the phrase I heard. Within a few months the phrase, "His eye is on Redemption", would be shared with the congregation by two other people without their knowledge of my word nor each other's.

In the fall of 2019, I had a number of visions concerning my spiritual journey. I was in the desert sitting in a large open pit which was about 20 feet deep. The pit had a wide mouth and it levelled out to the desert floor. To my left, about 200 feet away, I saw a narrow pass between two mountains. Beyond this pass the land opened up into an enormous valley encircled by mountains. The throne of God was at the far end and from His throne came a river of golden water. I sensed that this was the water of life. It flowed across the valley and traveled very close to the narrow mountain pass.

A month later, I had a picture of me leaving the desert pit, and I walked toward the mountain pass. Around the corner was the river of gold flowing down from the throne of God. The glorious presence of God was so overwhelmingly powerful. Despite being free from the pit, I was apprehensive of the valley and the outpouring of the glory of God, but I would not enter.

The next scene was of me walking out of the pit hand-in-hand with God. He had come to deliver me out of the pit, but we were not going to the valley. Instead, we were walking deeper into the desert where there was no end in sight. I sensed that because I had not entered into the valley and missed this opportunity, I was to, "*Go around the mountain*". He was not angry or disappointed in me, but I knew that this was where we needed to go in order to learn lessons that would prepare me to enter into this glorious valley without fear or hesitation. At this moment I felt an awareness that Redemption Church, too, had missed out on the prophecy from 2017.

I then felt like God showed me that my re-routed journey through the desert and around the mountain would be a prophetic symbol of what our church would experience. It would be a natural, but incorrect interpretation to feel that we had failed and remain stuck in this mindset. He was not angry, but I sensed a sadness at the loss of us both experiencing His blessing. A more accurate perception is that we would have an opportunity to learn and repent. I feel a confidence that when we come around again to the valley with the river of gold, we will choose to enter in. The purpose for this journey through the desert and around the mountain is to become of one mind with God, His Spirit, and His will. It is to be delivered from our weaknesses and to develop an unyielding posture to His plans and His purposes for His church, this church. The desert would also clear the dross away like it says in Proverbs 25:4¹, and it would refine us like precious metal.

I then sensed God speaking these words, “Do not be faint of heart or lose heart for I am the author of these plans. Do not think more highly of yourselves but rather think of yourselves with sober judgment”.

This past January, I was praying through the word and asked God to send us help. I saw a picture of Redemption Church in the desert. I saw a medical cross sign in my mind’s eye and tried to pray, “Lord, bring us to a hospital”. Somehow, I knew it was the wrong prayer. Then I prayed that an ambulance would pick us all up and bring us to a hospital. That was also the wrong prayer. Then I prayed that the ambulance would come out to us. This prayer flowed and the vision continued. Our location was not in the small town where the hospital was situated but miles away in the desert. It was then that I remembered that we (me and Redemption) were out in the desert with God to, “*Go around the mountain*”.

Then I saw that an ambulance was driving out to meet us. When it arrived, the personnel provided some of us with sunscreen for our sunburns, bottled water for dehydration, food for our physical weakness and hunger, or rest for our weak constitution. We were not discouraged. We knew to keep pressing forward. We also needed the encouragement to not attempt this journey on our own strength or in our own way as it says in Proverbs 3:5ⁱⁱ. However, there were a few people among us who, with persuasive words, would try to tempt us to listen to their advice and leave the desert. It was very important to our journey and end goal that we stay with the path set before us and not heed this advice which would shorten the journey. Rather, we needed to hold onto the assurance that God would deliver us at the right time.

The vision stopped, and then I saw a picture of a small space that was cluttered with wooden furniture. I sensed that we needed to let go of this clutter and rid the space of its excess as the room was no longer functional. This picture was just another indicator of the purging that God wanted to do while in the desert. I felt that if we were faithful in this process, we would be recognized as one’s whose hearts have gone through the refiner’s fire which is a reference to Zachariah 13:9ⁱⁱⁱ.

Then I felt God say, “I will surely lift you up as you look up and see Me; being of one mind and heart. Look up, for the day is coming that the harvesters will be overrun with harvest. The day is coming when My church will not be big enough, the walls not wide enough in your buildings to contain that which you have prayed for. I hear your prayer for lost souls for I, too, long for them to come in and know My Father. Take courage. Do not be faint of heart. As the deer pants and thirst for water, so I would wish for you to long for Me, to rest and dwell in My presence, to rest in My glory, and to rest amongst yourselves and in your gathered numbers. Take courage, do not be faint of heart”. The word ends here.

I would encourage us all to *consider* what God is saying to us individually and as a church body. I would encourage us to *ponder* and, in doing so, draw close to God. Proverbs 25:2 says, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; But the glory of kings is to search out a matter”. It may be natural to feel a bit overwhelmed with what I have shared, but I think, through prayer and earnestly seeking Him, there are a few questions we need ask God both individually and corporately.

First, what time is it?

Ecclesiastes chapter 3 talks about there being a season for everything. So, what time is it, Redemption? If we have been called into a specific season for a specific time, what are the activities of those who are walking in the desert with their Creator? Being drawn into a spiritual desert is sacred. Let's not ignore nor diminish its importance.

The second question is, why are we here?

The desert journey is a long-recognized season in the church's history of an intentional time whereby things of the flesh die, the soul is stripped, and we experience the refiner's fire which purges the dross from within us. Malachi 3:3 states, "He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver". One comes out from this desert journey a little less tied to the things of this world, reoriented to the ways of God and experience a deeper relationship with Christ. When God states that He has plans to prosper us and give us a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11^{iv}), He might just need to **first** rearrange our beliefs, activities, and priorities.

The last question I will leave you to ponder with is, what do we do?

There are so many OT stories of God turning around hopeless situations. King Jehoshaphat and the Israelites were desperate when the Moabites and Ammonites were approaching. In 2 Chronicles 20 (v.1-19) the scriptures record a number of spiritual actions that took place out of *utter desperation*:

King Jehoshaphat sought the Lord and proclaimed a fast, he prayed before the assembly of people who gathered to seek God, he made declarations about God's reign, authority and faithfulness, He proclaimed past times of deliverance, he petitioned God regarding their impending destruction, and he waited for the Spirit of God to come upon a servant to tell them what to do. It finishes with the king bowing with his face to the ground and the people worshipping and praising God. I think we need to ask the Spirit to reveal the truth of our situation and the state of our hearts and respond by calling out in desperation for His mercy and grace to transform us.

Two words of caution. As important as it is to ask God what to do, it is equally important to ask, what do we not do? Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain". It would also be wise to avoid asking, "How do **WE** get out of here?" A natural temptation would be to try to get out of a season marked by discomfort and uncertainty. Having personally passed through two spiritual deserts in the last 26 years, I have come to believe that as divine as it is to be led into this season, it is equally divine to be led out.

The word will be available in the chat and on the website.

ⁱ Proverbs 25:4 – Remove the dross from the silver, and a silversmith can produce a vessel

ⁱⁱ Proverbs 3:5 – Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding

ⁱⁱⁱ Zechariah 13:9 – This third I will put into the fire, I will refine them like silver and test them like gold.

^{iv} Jeremiah 29:11 – "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future".