

## **The Only Way Is FORWARD**

Scripture Readings:

Exodus 14:19 – 31 and Matthew 2:1 - 12

1/15/23

In the cartoon movie 'Finding Nemo' there is a goofy blue fish with a memory disorder named Dori. Throughout the story, Dori sings 'Just keep swimming; Just keep swimming!'

That is not bad advice! If you are feeling stuck or confused - just keep swimming. If you are feeling unsure which way to turn - just keep swimming. For us maybe this phrase would be better than Dori's - Just keep moving; just keep moving. If we are feeling stuck or confused - just keep moving. If we are feeling unsure which way to turn - just keep moving.

Often the way we are moving will be clear if we simply take the next faithful step.

In our first scripture reading from Exodus, the Israelites took a faithful step between two walls of water with the Egyptian army breathing down their neck. They moved forward under the leadership of Moses with God's mighty help. They moved forward!

In the forty years to come, the Israelites will do a lot of complaining about their plight in the wilderness. They will even long for their former life as slaves. They will say - 'If only we were back in Egypt! For the Israelites, their faithful steps between the two walls of water did not stop their doubting God's power. They moved forward but their feet were still planted in Egypt!

This story reminds us that though they wanted to go back to Egypt, they could not! There was no path back to Egypt. God shoved the waters aside and made a passageway for a particular time and place. But then God flooded the path with water again and destroyed the Egyptian army. God did not leave the sea divided, you closed the path through the sea just in case they changed their minds.

God told the Israelite people - Keep moving - Keep swimming - Keep moving forward!

I have known many families who have been through a harrowing experience of illness, death, heartbreak, and hope. Often these families need a plaque to hang in their home that says - 'We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned so we can accept the life that is waiting for us!'

Maybe that is why the Israelites had to wander for forty years before reaching the Promised Land. Maybe it took that long to shake off the slavery to their old life so that something new could begin!

In our second scripture reading from Matthew, we have the story of the three wisemen. But I would like to speak about King Herod today. His life was full of storms of fear.

King Herod was also called Herod the Great. He was the Roman appointed king and he built many things in the Holy Land. King Herod built many fortresses, aqueducts, theatres, other public buildings which generally raised prosperity in Judah. The New Testament paints King Herod as a tyrant into which Jesus was born.

King Herod had killed John the Baptist and King Herod lived in the storms of fear because he had been told that the One who would be the new born king of Israel would be born during his time as king. Fear distorted King Herod's vision.

So King Herod lied to the three wisemen when he told them that he wanted to worship this child. Fear distorted his vision. Fear blinded him to God's glory.

The wisemen decided after seeing the baby Jesus to take a different path home.

Storms of fear rage in our lives also. The commercial world infects our lives and sucks up our resources. We often do many good things like King Herod did but the storms of fear effect our lives and we go down the wrongs paths. We want to worship Jesus but we often have others things that get in our way.

So the two things we need to do is –

#1 – we need to name our fears

#2 – we need to entrust those distorted feelings to Jesus.

And if we do these two things, maybe we will be like the three wisemen and make the long journey to see Jesus.

So what storms are you facing right now? How can you entrust your fears and emotions to Jesus when the winds of fear rise?

In the next several weeks you are going to hear about our 2023 Stewardship Campaign. The title of the Stewardship Campaign is ‘Grow One Step or Two’. It will center on asking both in person and virtual viewers to increase their offering to the church.

We have not done a Stewardship Campaign in sometime, so for us to be able to structure our shared ministry to be most effect, we need to do a Stewardship Campaign.

Next week Bill Johnston will be visiting with us about this campaign. He will share facts and figures about our shared ministry. May each one of us think and pray about our ministry at the BBCC (DOC). May each family unit come to realize that to do the ministry of our church, we need the financial resources to do that.

Let us pray:

Loving Savior, thank you that you have always been present in the storms of fear in our lives. Help us to move through life’s scary moments. Help us each day to talk to You and entrust You with our fears. AMEN.