

### **Introduction**

Good morning, church. I am really excited about what God has for us today. Casey has been walking us through the book of Deuteronomy, and the lessons have been rich about the relationship God has with his people. In fact, the entire Exodus account is one of my favorite narratives in Scripture because it speaks so deeply into our journey with God as well.

Today, we will be spending some more time looking at the Israelites and their twisty road to and through the Red Sea. I call this the Wilderness Path, but it has other names as well. A few years ago, I read a great business book called The Messy Middle which talks about the focus that goes into the start of a business and the joy of reaching its end goals. But between start and finish is a long, hard, twisty journey called the Messy Middle. And that is where we spend much of our lives. It's where real life exists, and this Messy Middle, this Wilderness Path is where we'll be today.

If you were here in January, you may remember that I shared the Word with you, and we read from Hebrews 12:1-3 talking about running the race with endurance that is marked out for us. I'm going to do something unusual today and go back to the exact same passage that I preached on last time to set the stage for the Wilderness Path with Israel. So if you can please turn to Hebrews chapter 12 with me and stand for the reading of God's Word, I will read verse 1-2.

*It says: Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Would you pray with me? ...[prayer]... You may be seated.

### **Weights and Sin**

When we looked at this Hebrews passage back in January, I repeatedly asked the question, "Have we built our spiritual lives to last?" We spent a lot of time looking at the great cloud of witnesses being like runners on a relay team who went before us and now passed the baton off to us. And we looked to Jesus, the champion and finisher of our race, the one who started it and is going to bring it to perfect completion.

But today, I want to begin by looking at a phrase that is in the middle of verse 1 which we didn't spend a lot of time covering in January. This one little phrase makes such an impact on our lives because it is the Messy Middle of our lives.

The phrase says, "let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely..." Weights and sin, these two things are what take us from the start of the race squarely into the Messy Middle. See, if you're here today, you've most likely started your journey with God, but if you've been on that journey for any amount of time, you'll know that different weights, different sins keep pushing in. They make the journey hard.

Maybe it's those circumstances that inevitably come to weigh down a life: an extended sickness, a toxic work situation, a rocky marriage, the loss of a loved one, an unexpected move. The list goes on and on.

These trials, these weights burden us, and if we are honest, sometimes take us off the path God has laid out for us.

Or maybe its sins. Those pesky sins that never seem to be defeated, strongholds in our lives. Maybe it's a temper problem, or an addiction to social media, maybe it's the sin of comparison, or the fear of man, or the desire for comfort above all. Negativity, apathy, pride, bitterness... do I need to go on?

When these sins, so natural to our flesh, come bearing down on us, how can we keep running that race marked out by God? This is the Messy Middle we so often find ourselves in. And this is why I love the Exodus account because the story of the Israelites is one long look at the Messy Middle.

Egypt was the starting line, Canaan the finish. And in between was the Wilderness Path – their Messy Middle. So for the rest of our time today, I want us to walk with the Israelites on the beginnings of their Wilderness Path. We will go from Egypt through the Red Sea. Of course, we know that their journey continued 40 years after the Red Sea during their wanderings, but today we're just going to focus on those first weeks until they were finally done with Egypt once and for all...

### ***The Red Sea Scene***

Today, we're going to read through the Israelites' journey from Exodus 13:17 through all of chapter 14, but we'll do it in small chunks along the way. But before we get to the Scriptures, we are first going to look at the historical and geographical context that the Israelites found themselves in so that we might be able to better feel what they must have been feeling at the Red Sea with the Egyptians bearing down on them.

Remember Israel has just witnessed the greatest power display in the history of the world as God has literally destroyed the nation of Egypt with plague after plague.

The final plague was where the firstborn son of every house in Egypt was killed. Miraculously, the Israelites lost no one because they covered their door frames with blood. So now Pharaoh has ordered them all out of Egypt in the middle of the night and the Israelites go out of Egypt basically plundering the Egyptians because they were so desperate for the Israelites to leave.

Exodus tells us that the Israelites had been in Egypt exactly 430 years at this point. We know that Joseph had come first to Egypt and eventually he brought the rest of his family which numbered 70 people. Because of the Israelites fruitfulness, they had increased to around 2 million people in just 400 years to the time of the Exodus.

### ***The Historical Context: The Egyptian Empire***

But it wasn't just the Israelites who had grown during this time. Egypt, too, had flourished during the time leading up to the Exodus. You can see in this map the difference in the power of the Egyptian empire over the period of 1500 years. In 2500 BC, the empire was quite small but by 1500 BC it had grown tremendously and even included the Sinai Peninsula. What happened in that time to make the empire grow so much?

Well, Joseph lived somewhere between 2000-1600 BC and so it is highly probable that when Joseph came to power in Egypt, he helped the Egyptian empire grow to its farthest reach because the Scriptures say

that all the nations around were coming to buy grain from Egypt during the seven years of famine. It got so intense that the people eventually sold all of their land and even themselves to Joseph to buy grain. Then a generation after Joseph's death, the Israelites themselves were enslaved to build Egypt's infrastructure.

No doubt, this is what led to the Egyptian empire growing to where it was in 1500 BC. It was built on the backs of slaves. Then, with the Exodus happening 430 years later, we can guess that the plagues hit Egypt somewhere after 1500 BC and this, along with the loss of slaves, devastated the empire so much that it shrank considerably to where it was in 1000 BC.

The Israelites were right in the middle of the rise and fall of this empire.

### ***The Historical Context: Years of Slavery***

Now we know that Joseph was 30 years old when he became ruler of Egypt and then he died when he was 110 years old. It was after his death when the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites. So while the Israelites had been in Egypt 430 years before the Exodus, they had probably been slaves for a little less than 350 of those years.

In order to get a feeling for what it would be like to have been slaves for this long, we can consider that the first American colony was set up in 1586, which is 435 years ago – almost the same length of time that Israel lived in Egypt.

And like Israel's history, unfortunately, much of America's history has been filled with slavery as well. In fact, the slave trade in America lasted 341 years before the abolishment of slavery after our Civil War. That's longer than the US has even been a country. So this really puts it in context for us.

The Israelites were enslaved for roughly the same amount of time as the enslaved in America. That is a really long time. So long that the people alive in Egypt during the Exodus had only grown up knowing this harsh existence even hearing stories from their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents about slavery. Generations had come and gone with the Israelites crying out under the burden of slavery.

Imagine how it would have felt that night when the Israelites began their journey into freedom – maybe exciting, maybe joyful. But it probably also felt strange and uncertain. After all, no one they knew, even the oldest ones of them, had ever known what it felt like to be free.

And so they began their journey.

### ***The Geographical Context: The Exodus Route***

Now, if you look at this next map, there is an obvious route the Israelites should have taken if they wanted to get from Egypt to Canaan. They were in the city of Rameses which is in the very north of Egypt and so the natural path would have been to keep walking along the Mediterranean Sea about 140 miles and they could have gotten to Canaan in one or two weeks.

However, this is not the route God takes them on. You can see that God has them go south into the wilderness. There is some debate over where the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, but the route that makes

most sense to me has them going down into the Sinai Peninsula over to the Gulf of Aqaba which is a part of the Red Sea.

With this path, you can see that just to get to the Red Sea would be around 300 miles – a much longer and harder journey.

### ***The Geographical Context: Nuweiba Beach***

Now many scholars believe that the Israelites might have crossed the Red Sea at what is today called Nuweiba Beach. This route would be consistent with the Israelites crossing the Red Sea to arrive in the land of Midian where they received the Ten Commandments.

You can see that this beach juts out from the coast and the distance across the sea at this point is just over 10 miles. This also would make sense since it took the Israelites an entire night of walking to cross the Red Sea.

### ***The Geographical Context: Pictures***

You can see in this picture what the topography looks like leading up to the beach. It would have been an extremely hard road for the Israelites to travel and these mountains would have certainly made them feel pinned in as the Egyptians approached.

You can see then, after coming through the mountains, they would have arrived on this beach. Imagine 2 million people camped out here with no way to run between the water and the mountains.

Finally, you see in this picture what the Israelites would have been facing when they looked toward the sea. It is miles of water with mountains on the other side staring back at them. Certainly, there was no way to escape. The fear and desperation would have understandably been overwhelming.

### ***The Wilderness Path***

With this context in place, we finally get to Israel's journey from Pharaoh's court to the Red Sea. The first thing to note about any journey is that there is a point A and a point B – the origin and the destination.

We know that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. I will call this the short, easy path. And it would be so nice if this was the path that God led us on in our journey with him. But if you have been walking with God for any amount of time, you know that this is not the path where he leads us. Instead, he leads us through the Messy Middle.

With that, I want to start reading the story in Exodus 13. I'm going to read verses 17-18 and then skip down to 21. Here it says:

*When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt." But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea... And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.*

## **1. The Long, Hard Path**

So the first reality of our Messy Middle is that God leads us on the long, hard path. Notice that it is not straight, it is not wide. It is far from the short, easy path. This path is narrow, windy, and long. So why would God take us on this path? Why not the short, easy path?

As it said in Exodus, God is the one who led the Israelites into the wilderness. It doesn't say that he just sent a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. It says that the Lord went before them in the cloud and in the fire. It was God himself who was there.

But why would God lead them out of slavery only to lead them into the wilderness? We can be confident that God chooses the long, hard path for a reason.

In this case, he wanted to avoid war for the Israelites. He knew that if they went directly to Canaan on the short, easy path, they would go right through the Philistines who would fight them. God didn't want to discourage his people so that they might be tempted to return to Egypt. Can you hear how gently he is leading his people?

See the long, hard path is not the worse path. And God was proved right some months later. When the Israelites finally make it to the border of Canaan, they send spies into the land in Numbers 13. These spies come back afraid of how strong the Canaanites are and they discourage the people.

It gets so bad that they say in Numbers 14:

*"Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt."*

Do you hear it? Even after making it all the way to the border of the Promised Land, the Israelites are still tempted to return to their old life. This is the very thing that God wanted to avoid when he chose to take Israel on the long, hard path out of Egypt. God knew their hearts and he knew what was best for them. He knew they weren't ready for war.

And as we consider our own journey with God, might it not be the same?

Maybe the long, hard stretches of our lives are not a sign of God's apathy but of his grace. Maybe he is keeping us from something much worse. Maybe he knows that we'd be disheartened by Philistines and want to go back to Egypt.

Maybe, just maybe, God knows what's best for us. See, the Messy Middle has a purpose.

Long and hard can be far better than short and easy. If that's where you find yourself today, consider that God has your best in mind. It was that way for the Israelites as they started walking south.

## **2. A Change of Direction**

Now let's read more of the story starting in Exodus 14:1.

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, 'They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord." And they did so.*

Maybe we come to accept that the long, hard path is better for us because at least it's headed the right place. But then, God changes directions on us. All of a sudden, something unexpected comes up and our lives are thrown upside down. Maybe a child gets sick or we lose a job. All we know is that this was not according to our plans. We seem to be going backwards and getting farther from where we want to go.

We begin to question why God would change his mind. Why are we headed nowhere? The important thing to recognize in the story of Israel and in our own lives, is that God might have changed the direction, but he doesn't change the destination. He has brought this change of direction for a reason. We might not like the reason all the time, but he has a purpose.

In this case, he wants to get glory once again over Pharaoh so that the Egyptians would know him. At times, we don't like that we are inconvenienced for God's glory, but God is the one leading us through the Messy Middle and he gets to choose the direction.

Maybe the changes of direction in our lives are not a sign of God's meanness but of his care. Maybe our plans fall way short of what God has for us. Maybe his glory and our good are tied together.

Maybe, just maybe, God knows what's best for us. See, the Messy Middle has a purpose.

A change of direction might be just what we need to witness God's glory in our lives. It might feel frustrating to us at the time, but there are worse things than a change of direction. And then it does get worse.

### **3. The Midst of Attack**

Let's keep reading in Exodus 14:5.

*When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.*

*When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."*

*And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."*

So now, these recently freed slaves are in the middle of the wilderness between mountains and sea with an angry army of slave masters bearing down on them. Can it get any worse? Why would God lead the Israelites right into a death trap?

The situation seems bad enough but then we realize that God not only turned Israel back, but he also hardened Pharaoh's heart again to make him pursue the Israelites. So the attack the Israelites are facing is directly from God. He's the one who told them to go to Pi-hahiroth where they'd be attacked. But just like the long, hard path and the change of direction, God brings this attack for a reason.

The Israelites seem to think that God does this because there are not enough graves in Egypt – that God wants to perform a mass genocide. However, Moses steps in and gives us the reason for this attack. It is all about the eyes – where are the Israelites looking? Are they looking to God's salvation or to the Egyptian's malice?

God wants to take Israel's eyes off Egypt and onto him. "For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again." And it is the same for us. When we feel attack come from the enemy or from the world, do we look to Jesus, or do we look at our attackers?

Like the Israelites, we can begin to let fear control us. This fear makes us start to think crazy thoughts. "It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than die in the wilderness." For slaves who have groaned for generations in misery, this is a crazy thing to say. But we have to recognize human nature. We would sometimes rather live in the known of slavery than in the unknown of God's path.

Are you going through attack right now? Maybe the attack you're facing is an opportunity for you to lift your eyes to your King. Maybe your fear of the unknown is keeping you from faith. Maybe instead of trying to escape back to Egypt, you should run to your Strong Tower.

Maybe, just maybe, God knows what's best for us. Have no doubt, the Messy Middle has a purpose.

#### ***4. Impossible Obstacles***

This is the point of the story when we would expect God to come down and destroy the Egyptian army leaving the Israelites free. But that is not what happens. God has one more wrinkle to throw onto the Wilderness Path.

Let's read further in verse 15.

*The Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."*

*Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.*

*Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians."*

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.*

Imagine what Moses and the Israelites were thinking when God tells them "Go forward". Where were they supposed to go forward... into the water? And so it is that God leads us to impossible obstacles. By telling the Israelites to go forward, God was writing them a death sentence. But as with every stop on the Wilderness Path, God has his reasons.

See, God could have empowered the Israelites to defeat the Egyptians in battle. Yes, this would have been a miracle, but an explainable miracle at least. But God didn't want the Israelites to have to fight for their own salvation. He never does, because salvation is a work of God alone.

*The Lord will fight for you, and you only have to be silent.*

God is the one who moved between the Egyptians and the Israelites in the cloud. God is the one who drove the sea back all night. God is the one who sent the Egyptians into panic clogging their chariot wheels. God is the one who threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. And God is the one who carried the Israelites through the Red Sea to salvation.

See, this story really has nothing to do with the Israelites' work. They did nothing except walk forward in faith, and even that was a result of God leading them the whole way. Isaiah 63 says:

*Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble. Like livestock that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.*



See, God is the one doing all the work leading Israel like a man leads a horse irresistibly to salvation. And it is the same for us. We do nothing to earn our salvation. Listen to Psalm 139:

*You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.*

Can you hear it? God is the one leading us no matter where we find ourselves. Whether we are on the long, hard path or going through a change of direction, whether we find ourselves in the midst of attack or facing impossible obstacles. God is right there with us.

And he has a reason for the path we are on. See, it wasn't just the Egyptians that were going into the Red Sea to die. The Israelites too, were symbolically walking to their death so that they might come out in a new life.

Do you feel like you're facing an impossible obstacle? Maybe the impossible obstacle you're facing is the way God's going to bring you to new life. Maybe what's impossible for man is possible for God.

Maybe, just maybe, God knows what's best for us. Let me say it again, the Messy Middle has a purpose.

## **5. A New Life**

And so we finally read in verse 30:

*Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.*

God was going to bring the Israelites to their destination. There was no question about that. It was just a matter of how.

See, God could have saved the Israelites in many ways. In fact, the entire Red Sea scene didn't have to happen. After all, the Israelites had already been freed from their slavery, and God could have taken them straight to Canaan. But God wanted to make sure the Israelites saw with their own eyes that they had been saved from Egypt once and for all.

And we can see that the Israelites finally did get it. They saw the dead Egyptians strewn about the path. They saw God's power in full display. And so they feared him and put their trust in him. And we can learn the same thing in our own Messy Middle. If we are faithful to look back at our lives, we will see our old weights and sins lying dead on the path. This is so that we might trust in God.

For the Israelites, the Wilderness Path was extended for 40 more years because of their disobedience. We won't look at that today, but we know that God eventually brought his people into the land of promise. So we have to step back now and ask why God takes us through the Messy Middle at all. We have seen different lessons along the path, but couldn't he teach us those lessons a different way?

## **From Out to In**

To answer this question, I want to go back to a key set of verses that frame the entire Exodus story. Back in Exodus 6 before any of the plagues have come, God makes a promise to Moses and gives the explanation for the Wilderness Path they will take.

In Exodus 6:6 it says:

*Say therefore to the people of Israel, "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment."*

The first thing God promises is to bring his people **out** from under the burden of slavery. In our journey with God, this bringing out is the beginning of our journey when we leave point A.

Then back at Exodus 6, we read about point B in verse 8:

*"I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord."*

We can see that God doesn't just lead his people out of slavery only to leave them as wanderers. He brings them **out** so that he might bring them **in** – into the land of promise. We, too, are brought out to be brought in. And this bringing into our inheritance is the arrival at point B.

But we know that the fastest way to get from point A to point B is the short, easy path. Couldn't God bring us out of slavery to sin and immediately into the blessing of inheritance? Couldn't we skip the Messy Middle altogether?

The answer is, "Yes," he could do that. But he doesn't. He takes us through the Messy Middle just as he took the Israelites on the Wilderness Path. But why?

## **That We Might Know Him**

We can finally see the ultimate answer by looking at verse 7. Right in the middle of verse 6 and 8, it says:

*"I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."*

Do you hear it? The reason God wants to take us through the twists and turns of the Messy Middle is so that we might **know** him. He is our God and wants to be with us and for us to see his provision, his power, his character. Sure, he could instantaneously transport us from A to B, but how would we then come to know him?

Maybe, just maybe, God knows what's best for us. And that's for us to know him. The Messy Middle has a purpose.

God is known best when we are laboring on that long, hard path, not flying through what's short and easy. His will is drawn out most clearly when he changes direction on us, not when everything goes according

to our plans. His protection is made famous in the midst of attack, not when we always feel comfortable. His glory is incomparably revealed as we walk through impossible obstacles, not when we always have the answer. And he is praised most fully at the coming of new life.

When we realize that each of these stops in the Messy Middle is a means for us to know God better, it changes everything. It allows us to look for God in the midst of the trials rather than to look for relief. It helps us understand the purpose of our times in the Messy Middle. And that's to know him. This takes us all the way back to where we started. Hebrews 12.

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

How do we lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely? How do we run with endurance the race set before us?

We look to Jesus. We get to know Jesus. We find our strength in Jesus. It's what believers have been doing from the very beginning of time.

Whether they're on the long, hard path or whether they're going through a change of direction. Whether they're in the midst of attack or up against an impossible obstacle. Jesus is with them. And Jesus wants to be with you today as well.

Do you need to give your heart to Jesus? Give it today and find new life. Don't go back to Egypt.

Or maybe you know Jesus, but you are walking through the Messy Middle right now. Maybe life's weights or your own sins are pressing heavy on you. Take heart. Jesus is right there with you. He brought you out of Egypt to bring you into the Promise Land. And he's going to bring you through the Red Sea to get there.

He does all this so that you might know him well. Just look to him. He will fight for you, and you only have to be silent.

Let's pray.