

Daily Devotional, October 29, 2020 The Lord is With Us

“And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size.” Numbers 13:32 (NIV)

In this verse from Numbers, the Hebrew people had been delivered from their long-suffering captivity in Egypt. God, through Moses, had led them out of their slavery and miraculously saved them from the powerful Egyptian army. After a long period of forty years traveling in the wilderness, the Israelites are now on the border of the land that God had promised them.

Previous to this verse, in Numbers 13, Moses is commanded by God to send twelve spies into the promise land. These spies were leaders from each of the tribes. They were commanded to see if the people who occupied the land were strong or weak, and to see if the land was filled with “good fruit.” The spies went into the promised land and did just as they were commanded. When they returned from their mission, they brought back examples of the good fruit to be found there. It was true, the land was flowing with “milk and honey.”

The spies also gave a report about the strength of the people who occupied the promised land. Eight of the spies reported that the tribes that already inhabited the land would be impossible to overcome. They reported that the cities were heavily fortified, and that the people were far too strong to overcome. They further reported that there were people living in the promised land who were giants. When the Israelites heard this report, they were shaking in their sandals. They started to grumble and cry out in anguish as to why they had been led all this way across the wilderness, only to face giants and powerful armies who were well protected inside a great fortress.

However, two of those spies, Joshua and Caleb, did not agree with that report. They did agree that there was good fruit in the land. But their assessment was that they did not believe that it would be impossible to overtake this land that had been promised to them. They told the people, “ ***The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.***” (Numbers 14:7-9)

One wonders why twelve people who saw the same thing would have such differing reports? Why would one group be willing to go, and the other group be so overcome with fear that they would want to retreat? I believe the answer is found in the focus of those who are reporting to Moses and the Israelites. Joshua and Caleb, just like the other eight, witnessed the good and the bad in the promised land. However, Joshua and Caleb kept their focus on the God who had delivered them from their captivity in Egypt. Joshua and Caleb kept their focus on the God who was bigger than any giant living in the promised land.

This story in the book of Numbers is important for us today. There are so many things in our lives that bring us fear. When we focus on the ‘giants’ in our lives, they can seem overwhelming and the task before us can look insurmountable. The good news is, our God is bigger! Our faith teaches us that the fortified cities of the promised land crumbled before God. The biblical story reminds us that the giants of the promised land were so small compared to the greatness of our God. Today, I pray we are reminded that the same God who ultimately led the Israelites to victory is the same God who is with us today and will remain with us always.

Prayer: Lord, I come before your throne with a heavy heart and an anxious mind. Fill me with your Holy Presence. Let me rest and be at peace in You. Let me feel your protection. Let me feel as if I’m under the shadow of your wings, safe, hidden, and secure in you. Please take my fear away and give me your peace that surpasses all understanding. My trust and my hope is on you alone. Thank you for hearing me, in the name of Jesus Christ, our lord. Amen.