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“I Am With You Always” Our Motive for Mission

LEE MAGNESS

This reading reminds us all, the called and sent of the Lord, that the power with which we go forth on mission, in ministry, in life and in service, is the persistent presence of God. The reading is formatted here for two readers, one wording the opening poetic lines of each stanza and the other voicing the passages of our great promise, “I will be with you,” in the italicized lines.

- 1 From urban Ur to the hinterlands of Haran
to the land-I-will-show-you of Canaan,
from north to the Negev, from Egypt and back,
like Abraham, we go off with only these words:
- 2 *Fear not, I am your shield. (Gen 15.1)*
God is with you in all that you do. (Gen 21.22)

- 1 From well to well, from field to field,
bearing the covenant in Beersheba,
enduring as an alien in his own land,
like Isaac, we whisper only these words:
- 2 *Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you. (Gen 26.3)*
Fear not, for I am with you. (Gen 26.24)

- 1 Fleeing his own foolishness,
a broken bearer of the covenant,
running there in fear and returning in fear,
like Jacob, we journey on with only these words:
- 2 *Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go. (Gen 28.15)*
Return to the land of your fathers, and I will be with you. (Gen 31.3)

- 1 Abandoned by his brothers,
brought to Egypt, bought in Egypt, bound in Egypt,
fettered and forgotten, freed and found,
like Joseph, we remember only these words:
- 2 *God will be with you and will bring you to the land of your fathers. (Gen 48.21)*

- 1 Rescued from the river, raised by royalty,
 running from his own wrongdoing,
 herding in the wilderness, hearing on the mountain,
 like Moses, we face the Pharaohs with only these words:
- 2 *But I will be with you.* (Exod 3.12)
 My presence will go with you. (Exod 33.14)
- 1 Standing uncertain at the foot of Sinai,
 wondering at the yawning wilderness,
 among a sacred but stiff-necked people,
 like Moses, we answer our own question:
- 2 *How shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people?*
 Is it not in your going with us? (Exod 33.16)
- 1 Across muddy Jordan, around mighty Jericho,
 keeping covenant, confirming covenant,
 leading the Lord's people, landing in the land of promise,
 like Joshua, our battle cry is but only these words:
- 2 *Be strong and courageous, for I will be with you.* (Deut 31.23)
 As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. (Josh 3.7)
- 1 A fearful farmer, a harvester in hiding,
 provisioned with a handful of warriors,
 sipping only a handful of water,
 like Gideon, we march into Midian with only these words:
- 2 *The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.* (Judg 6.12)
- 1 Shepherding his sheep, strumming his strings,
 slinging his sling, slaying his thousands,
 anointed, appointed, reliant, repentant,
 like David, we trade our talents for trust:
- 2 *A man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and the Lord is with him.* (1 Sam 16.18)
 Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you. (2 Sam 7.3)
 Is not the Lord your God with you? And has he not given you peace? (1 Chr 22.18)
 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
 I will fear no evil, for you are with me. (Ps 23.4)
- 1 Confronting, challenging, warning, warming,
 a prophet of destruction, a prophet of hope,
 a prophet of captivity, a prophet of comfort,
 like Isaiah, we face flood and flame with only these words:
- 2 *Fear not, for I am with you.* (Isa 41.10)
 When you pass through the waters and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
 when you walk through fire you shall not be burned; the flame shall not consume you,
 I will be with you. (Isa 43.2)

- 1 Plucking up and planting,
we swallow the little scrolls of hope,
and speak them out to the hopeless,
like all the prophets of old, we proclaim only these words:
- 2 *Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you. (Jer 1.8)*
The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing. (Zeph 3.17)
Work, for I am with you. I am with you. (Hag 1.13, 2.4)
- 1 Wherever we go, wherever we are sent,
with the people of God we answer our own question:
- 2 *How shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people?*
Is it not in your going with us? (Exod 33.16)
- 1 Blessed in the birthing, perplexed and pondering,
full of how-can-this-be? in the face of the inconceivable,
like Mary, we are pregnant with promise,
a promise predicated on only these words:
- 2 *Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you. (Luke 1.38)*
- 1 Called for a sending, sent in his calling,
in the power of God, for the proclamation of his Son,
in the presence of his Spirit,
like Paul, we promise only this:
- 2 *And the God of love and peace will be with you. (2 Cor 13.11)*
The Lord be with you all. (2 Thess 3.16)
- 1 Boundaries? Borders? Barriers?
Failures? Fears? Foes?
When we dread where we might dwell,
Paul calls us with only these words:
- 2 *For we are the temple of the living God; the God who said,*
"I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them." (2 Cor 6.16)
- 1 Boundaries? Borders? Barriers?
Failures? Fears? Foes?
When we dread where we might dwell,
John comforts us with only these words:
- 2 *Behold, the dwelling place of God is with people. He will dwell with them,*
and they will be his people, and God, their God, will be with them. (Rev 21.3)
- 1 Wherever we go, wherever we are sent,
with the people of God we answer our own question:
- 2 *How shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people?*
Is it not in your going with us? (Exod 33.16)

1 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

2 *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

1 *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

1,2 *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* (Matt 28.19–20)

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