

## God Prepares the Way (Retreat part 13)

The early pages of Jesus' photo album show us God's patient and faithful preparation to send Jesus among us. We find the photo of God calling Abram and Sarai to leave their homeland to begin a new journey. There are the births of Isaac and Jacob/Israel. The album has page after page of photos of the long slavery in Egypt, of Moses's birth and life, the Exodus and liberation, the forty years of wandering in the desert, and the early years in the Promised Land. From desert nomads to a people with a covenant: *you be my people and I will be your God.*

God sent judges to adjudicate differences between the people and then God appointed kings to rule them and then prophets to challenge them and their corrupt kings. As with any family photo album, we are puzzled and perhaps shocked to see the incredible infidelity of the people, the division of the nation, and its demise in the Babylonian captivity. Then there is the rebuilding of the temple and those final years of occupation and relative peace that came with Rome's occupation.

There is an *Advent* feel to this week of the retreat. In our growing desire to know, love, and be with Jesus, we are taken back to the years of anticipation. There's the *promise* of a land, of a king, of an everlasting kingdom. The prophets speak of what it will be like when "the day of the Lord" comes. This all tells us so much about the mission of Jesus. It will help us understand the confused expectations he will face, the rejection he will encounter, the paradoxical way he will fulfill those promises.

This week we let our minds and hearts listen to the story that prepared the way for Jesus to enter into our world and our lives. As lovers, we want to know everything about Jesus. Looking through all those early photos, we appreciate, perhaps as never before, God's fidelity and the enormous mission that Jesus was born to take up.

Throughout the background times this week, we reflect on whatever comes to our hearts. How much more do we understand who he is? How is our love growing? What do we feel drawn to express to the one who is showing us his incredible photo album?

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### Pray in these or similar words...

Dear Lord,

What a different kind of week! I've never thought of the Old Testament as your own family history, but it is the stories of all of the people who came before you, who had such a powerful influence on you. When I started this retreat, I showed you the photo album of my life, the high and low points, and I saw that you were always there with me. Now, as I feel closer and closer to you, I want to see your history, your stories. You are someone I love, and I want to hear the stories that shaped you.

There is so much expectation in these stories. So many ways your people have waited for you, patiently or impatiently, over the centuries. They were looking for a king, one who would come and rule them and save them. But you were such a different kind of king! They waited for glitz and glamour, and you showed them poverty and service.

Could you feel their disappointment? You knew so well the stories that had been there for centuries, about the king who would come. Was it hard for you to be so different from what they thought? I know it's so human to want to please others. Did you struggle at all with what you were, what you wanted to teach them?

Oh, Jesus. Thank you so much for loving us all, for loving me, so much that you chose this life on earth. I can only imagine your struggles to really get across your message to people who might have been disappointed. What kind of king were you? You weren't what they had been led to expect. But you stayed and you stayed faithful to your message.

Thank you for sharing your stories, your family. Please be with me this week as I carry a sense of your history with me, those wonderful and vivid Old Testament stories, and as I see that they are really the story of waiting for you, of you fulfilling the promise to us. My dear friend, thank you for staying with me, even when I disappoint, when I am not all that I was created to be. Thank you for your utter faithfulness and love for me.