
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

May 22, 2016

Remembering Who We Are (Location: En-Gedi)

*“Look! Today your own eyes have seen that the Lord handed you over to me in the cave.
But I refused to kill you. I spared you, saying,
‘I won’t lift a hand against my master because he is the Lord’s anointed.’”*
I Samuel 24:10 (Common English Bible)

En is a Hebrew word meaning, “spring,” while Gedi means, “young goat” or “kid.” Placed together, the meaning of the name for this location is, “spring of a kid.” Many springs are found throughout this area but only two are fresh water, the others providing water that is tainted with salt or Sulphur. The En-Gedi is one of the freshwater springs and is still visible today, flowing-up from beneath a rock more than four hundred feet above the Dead Sea. This spring of fresh water, flowing down a cliff into a pool before finally emptying into the Dead Sea, is made all the more spectacular by its contrast with the drab, dry desert that surrounds it. During his years as a fugitive, David hid in one of the numerous caves among the cliffs that surround this spring.

Except for a green oasis immediately surrounding the En-Gedi, the barren mountains and plains that extend out from this spring have been called Israel’s “bad lands” – a place of such desolation that it feels abandoned, even by God. Less than an hour’s drive from Jerusalem, my initial response, upon my first trip here, was that this was the most inhospitable place on earth, a lonely place, a desperate place. Appropriate then, that David sought refuge here while on the run from King Saul who sought David’s life. Hiding in one of the numerous caves that dot the mountains that surround this spring, David’s future was uncertain. He was a wanted man and King Saul commanded a powerful army with one determined mission, the death of David.

Absorbing all the desolation, loneliness and fear of this land into his own body and spirit, David received a gift from God’s hand. During Saul’s pursuit, he went into one of these dark caves to use the restroom, the very cave where David was in hiding. The good news for David, and one common to our own experience, is that David’s eyes had adjusted to the darkness of the cave as David looked toward the bright entrance. Saul entering the cave could see nothing, including the man he was pursuing sitting right in front of him. Here was David’s chance to strike first, to kill the man who sought his own life.

David did not. Rather, David snuck up on him and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe while Saul was relieving himself. After Saul left the cave, David also went out of the cave and yelled after Saul, “My master the king!” Saul looked back, and David bowed low out of respect. Then David showed Saul the piece of the cloth that he had cut from Saul’s robe. This was to demonstrate that David could have chosen to kill Saul and did not. David would not respond to Saul in fear and hatred, even though Saul sought David’s life. David offers Saul his reason, “You are the Lord’s anointed.” Even in fear of his own life, David remembers who he is; David is a man who has given his life to one purpose, the service and glory of almighty God.

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