

Rolling and Blessed Rivers

“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”~ Isaiah 43:19

I read in a devotional recently that faith is God’s presence is like a river. If we pay attention to him, all the distractions will fade away as the river of life moves forward.

One of America’s classic songs is “Shenandoah”. It is based on a trapper’s journey in his hope to marry an Iroquois Chief’s daughter. That chief’s name was Shenandoah, but the rest of the story is that he became a Christian later on. He fought in many wars, and lived to be over one hundred years old.

Near the end of his life, after he had gone blind, he is recorded as saying, “I am an aged hemlock. I am dead at the top. The winds of an hundred winters have whistled through my branches. Why my Jesus keeps me here so long, I cannot conceive. Pray ye to him, that I may have patience to endure till my time may come.”

The journeys we have taken, and the rivers we have encountered in them, are important to the faith journey of God’s people. We must be prepared to swim in them, to travel them, to cross them, and to be blessed by them. God takes the powerful and wonderful things of this world and gives them divine meaning.

We must pay attention to what God says, for those words are full of blessing. We must listen for God in the rolling rivers crashing on the rocks, in the quiet eddy of a secluded bank. We must seek the rivers of God, in regular worship, in reading of the scriptures, and in quiet devotional moments, for our lives will be much the better for that seeking. God says, “If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the waves of the sea.” ~Isaiah 48:18

Not only do we seek the river, we can be a part of that river of faith. When we believe in Christ Jesus, our hearts become filled with him. “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’

Rivers upon rivers, peace flowing from one to another. What a beautiful picture! As rivers of life make their way heart to heart, they cut through mountains of doubt, valleys of difficulty.

Norman McLean, a Presbyterian minister who lived by a river and loved fly-fishing with his sons, wrote a book called *A River Runs Through It*. He said, “Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time.”

As rivers of faith flow into other rivers of faith, we are carried along on a spiritual journey in which beauty and opportunity is around every bend. Sure there are dangers, as sin and selfishness can be found in that journey. But the search for the birds which sing of salvation is unending. We encounter rapids which turn into waterfalls, rivers that flow in to rivers, and Oceans of life at their outlet.

There was a man, a soldier named Naaman, who was very sick with leprosy. He met the prophet Elisha, who told him to dip himself in the Jordan River, and he would be healed. He fussed and fumed like we often do. He suggested other alternatives. Then, when he obeyed the man of God, he found healing.

Jesus was baptized in the Jordan centuries later. The Holy Spirit came down on him in the form of a dove. God spoke from heaven. It was a major river event.

God wants river events for all of us. He waits for us to see beneath the surface of the water. He shows us how to cross the uncrossable, to swim and delight in the constant flow of blessing he provides.

Will we wait too late to see that river of life? Will we look back on our time on earth and wish we had travelled those rivers, seen God in action, but missed out on it?

Only time will tell. The rolling rivers are there. The blessed rivers keep flowing. They never stop. There is enough room for everyone.

Heaven is described as having a great river. It's at the end of time, but still flowing. "Then the angel," John writes, "showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb"~Revelation 22:1

By the way, the trapper never married the Indian maiden. Shenandoah would not give his permission. But God promises, that if we ask for faith, he will grant it. Always. Without hesitation. Like a river flows, so does his grace.