

Immerse Day 66 :: May 3 (by Kristy Miller)

A former pastor of mine used to remind us that hard work is valuable throughout a person's entire life: "You're not done until you're dead," he preached as encouragement. Our skills remain valuable as we age, and those skills are gifts from a God who wants to use us no matter how wrinkled our skin becomes, how outdated our tech skills, or how many mistakes we have made along the way. I think Moses would have agreed.

Gazing at Canaan from the other side of the Jordan, Moses must have had some mixed emotions. He knew he would not set foot in Canaan, would not smell its cedar or drink wine made from its grapes. Maybe he felt remorse? Now that the generation he led was gone, he knew that, in Heaven, he would soon join those familiar with the smell of the Red Sea's floor and the sound of Pharaoh's horses' hooves. Perhaps he felt a little relief?

Perhaps. In the beginning of Deuteronomy, Moses's review of the Israelites' journey from Sinai, strikes a different chord in me. My sons are both graduating in a month or so. The oldest is leaving college, and the youngest is just about to enter. Most days, I am indescribably proud of both of them in that way that I've heard parents older than I am describe. I watch them quietly; a lump swells in my chest and temples; and I am incredibly aware of how much I love them.

I'm equally aware of how vulnerable I feel. I see evidence that my parenting has succeeded in some ways and failed in others. My prayers reflect this awareness. "Please, God, let his manager/professors see him as you do. Please, God, let them be wise guides. Please, God, let those in his life extend, not extinguish, the work I have tried to do in raising him. Please, God, prepare others in his life to mitigate the mistakes I have made." And "Please, God, please let him choose you." I don't want them to have to go it alone. I want them to move into adulthood with some sense of where they came from so that they feel rooted to the generations behind them and equipped for their new life. I want them to recognize the way God has faithfully supported our family through generations.

So, this is the way I imagine Moses on the eve of his death. I imagine he is incredibly proud of his people, and I imagine he feels compelled to remind them of all they have learned in forty years of wandering but, instead, focuses on key portions of the Law. They wandered with an ark in front of them, a symbol of the covenant God made with them while they were nomads. Just ten rules. That's all they had to follow: ten rules. How kind that God didn't force legions of rules on a traumatized people who needed to put as much physical and emotional space between themselves and slavery in Egypt.

Now, as they prepare to enter Canaan, Moses reminds them of their journey, describes the setting and the geographic boundaries of their new home, and begins to extend those ten laws. My understanding is that the extension of the laws prepares them for a more settled life because they will no longer be nomads.

God uses Moses, on the eve of his death, to remind the Israelites of their past, to point them to their new home, and to extend the law so that they are equipped for a new lifestyle. Interestingly, Moses' words are hidden away and then 'discovered' during the reign of King Josiah in 621 B.C., according to Asimov's Guide to the Bible, and are now available to us thousands of years later. Apparently, God used Moses well after his death as well.

Moses' words come to me again, on what I dearly hope is the eve of COVID's death, and remind me that perhaps it makes sense to pause. Reflecting on the past year and recommitting to God's laws so that I don't have to enter into this new post-COVID reality without a fresh reminder of his guidance may be a wise use of time. I'm, thankfully, not dead so I must still have much to do.