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THE STORM

IT'S OUT THERE...

DAY 1: THE LIGHTHOUSE

Read Exodus 33:12-23; Matthew 5:14-16.

I have a fascination with lighthouses! This probably stems from the fact that I was born and raised at the seaside. Lighthouses tend to be constructed on solid rock and deliberately strong enough to withstand whatever severity of storm and sea-lashings the ocean throws up. Their light shines for the full 24 hours but it is only visible during the hours of darkness or the confusion of thick fog. The lighthouses' over-riding purpose at that time is to shine a light and sound a loud warning to prevent ships being wrecked and lives lost.

Whenever I mention the subject of lighthouses, people immediately jump to focus on the light but the truth is that without the careful construction of the tower itself - its foundation on the rock, the internal steps and different levels built gradually from ground-level upwards - the lighthouse would not be able to do its essential work.

In 2012 a small group of us spent part of a week on retreat on Lundy Island. On the evening before we were taken off-island I climbed to the top of the old abandoned lighthouse and stood on the former lamp platform. I was alone and simply began to worship God. As I did so I became aware of something like smoke hovering around and above my head. It being February and cold, I tested whether this was just my breath but it persisted even when I stopped singing. A friend walked up to join me from the harbour and as he arrived he told me to quickly put the light out because it could be a distraction to shipping. There had been no light other than me!! It seems that as I gave myself unreservedly in worship to God and rededicated myself to be a beacon and fire-igniter for His Kingdom, He had supernaturally lit me up!! My friend just happened to have two candles and matches in his breast pocket (as you do!!) so we placed the candles on the lamp platform and

lit them. We felt they represented the whole house of Israel: Jews and the Gentile church. What happened next took us both by surprise: through the magnification of the glass in the windows of the lamp room we saw these two tiny lights spread outwards not only across the whole island but further across the Bristol Channel into the South West, Wales and beyond towards the Irish Sea. There were literally hundreds upon hundreds of lights, so many it was impossible to count them.

On that extraordinary evening the Lord used these supernatural events to begin teaching me the profound prophetic symbolism of the lighthouse. Over the next few weeks we will unpack this teaching together. We will begin by ensuring we have a strong foundation built solidly on Jesus the Rock. Then we will move gradually through the construction of the lighthouse until eventually we reach the lamp room and the light itself. This is necessarily a step-by-step process but if we want His burning light to shine brightly through us as we face one of the most uncertain and stormy seasons the world and the church have ever experienced, we need to pay careful attention to how we build. If we miss even one step then what is built will be faulty and therefore liable to subsidence or collapse. We need to nurture patience and allow Him to so build Himself in us and us in Him that He not only becomes our firm foundation but also our strong tower; a living breathing reality literally burning in our heart. Only then will we be able to remain strong, stable and secure through the fierceness of the storm. The end-result will be that the world around us will not only see the strength of His burning glory shining in us but also come to understand that Jesus is their light and hope too.

Additional reading: John 11:9; Acts 26:17-18; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18.

Express your willingness to allow God to do whatever He needs to do in you to make you the person you need to be. His will is for us to shine with His light and burn with His glory through the storms we face.

DAY 2: STORMS ARE INEVITABLE

Read John 16:33; Luke 8:22-25.

60's singer Lynn Anderson once sang *"I beg your pardon I never promised you a rose garden, along with the sunshine there's gotta be a little rain sometime."* Jesus warns us that whilst we live in this world we must expect difficult stormy times. I wish it were not true but it is.

In the natural world there are many different grades of storm and this is also true for us in life. One person deals with the daily trials of caring for a loved one who, owing to dementia, is wandering the streets at night and constantly phoning the police whilst their neighbour's daughter arrives home to stay with nothing but a bag and her baby; another person struggles to deal with crippling anxieties, suicidal thoughts and a minimal level of self-confidence whilst their friend's over-confidence means they thoughtlessly blunder into situations stirring up unnecessary trouble and causing offence. The peace of our life can be suddenly overturned as we have to make sense of and live with the result of sudden job loss, relationship breakdown, accidents, traumas or other people's choices that impact our lives. Everyday matters like health, food, money, jobs, housing and family relationships mean we all have to live with storms.

Of course I do not know what particular storm you are facing or living through right now but God does. It is not a surprise to Him and even though it may not feel like it, Jesus is with you; right in the centre of it with you. It is not the storm that is the issue but your reaction to it that matters: in everything we have a choice - either to let it overwhelm us and be damaged or broken by it or to place our trust in God. The name Jesus or *Yeshua* in Hebrew means 'salvation' or 'deliverer' so when we call on His name, even though the situation may remain the same and we still have to deal with it, deep inside He will bring calm to our anxious

thoughts, maybe give us fresh guidance or reveal a solution. Over and above these things, He will bring our spirits to the place of peace in Him.

Additional reading: 2 Corinthians 4:8-18; Isaiah 43:1-2.

PRAYER TIME:

Reflect on your life today and make a list of any situations or circumstances you consider to be your current storms.

Which is the most pressing matter?

What is Jesus saying to you?

Pour your heart out to God over the most pressing storm you are facing. Thank Him that He understands. Thank Him that even though you still have to face the storm, He has promised to be with you in it. Ask Him to fill you with His peace and to teach you how to live as an overcomer.