

Sunday we left church after hearing a powerful message that resonated with so many of us, about God's faithfulness to the Israelites in providing a way out of their slavery and oppression, and joining together at the communion table, and then we were hit with the news of the horrific murder of half the congregation of a Church in Texas that shares our name.

If you're like me, upon hearing the news, your heart sunk out of your body and spilled out onto the floor. People just like us, worshiping the same God we worship, whose lives were taken by an act of evil.

Can I confess something here? My thoughts on Sunday weren't exactly holy. I was angry that a man could just walk in a mow down a church full of strangers. Not a "in your anger do not sin" angry. I was full of sinful, angry judgement for this man, and entertained thoughts about where I hoped he was now burning... terrible, I know. I anxiously thought about my own safety as I sit in church each Sunday. I questioned why God has allowed so much pain and hurt and anguish to fill our world as of late. Tempted to despair I was, and hope (once again this year) seemed nowhere to be found.

God did like God tends to do when I sin-spiral, and reminded me of what I say I believe. And with a hard swallow, I asked God to forgive me and give me a peaceful, merciful heart. One that is more like His. He reminded me that while death is the worst thing that can happen to us on earth, for those of us that trust in him, evil can never triumph over us—not in life and certainly not in death. But man, how quickly my feelings and fears and emotions can skew the truth I believe about who God is. Sometimes the truth and grace of the Gospel feels so offensive to my nature.

Rightly so, I suppose.

Its no secret that we are all walking, breathing hypocrites. When we're on mountaintops with concisely mapped out trails and breathtaking views, its easy to proclaim God's goodness and his eternal faithfulness. Every now and then, however, we tumble down into the valley and we're not so sure. Those very truths we stood on on our best days, can feel almost taunting when we're climbing out of deep, dark pits seemingly alone. Yet regardless of how faithful we are, we all experience times where the periods of our sentences transform into question marks.

God you are so good....right?

God you are always with me....right?

You will never leave me....right?

In the span of two hours post church, God made Sunday's message real in my heart. We have an opportunity everyday in every situation to choose the path we're going to take. In our actions. In our thoughts. In the things we fear. God meets in the corners of our souls where the dust and cobwebs collect. Where we still require so much refining. He draws our sins in the sand, and still he refuses to stone a single one of us, choosing instead to keep growing us into His image.

So much of my writing the last several weeks has been a reflection of my own heart being broken and bled out. My own feeble questions. My own issues with believing that I am not forgotten, and that even in the depths, my faithfulness is important. This series in Exodus has been wrecking me as I reexamine my own faith through this especially trying season. But so many of you have made the vulnerability worth it as you've shared your stories. And that's everything I wanted this blog to be—a place to be honest, and the hope that it helps others to be honest as well. We don't always get all the answers, but we do get one another to walk with—locked arm in arm with the same goal of getting back to the mountaintops.

And just as he parted the waves and guided Moses and the Israelites down the middle of a great sea, he guides us daily down our own red sea roads. The hardships and trials we face. Through the times we're disappointed with our families. The times we feel lonely. The times we feel forgotten. When we experience scary health conditions. The things that bind up our hearts and aim to discourage and distract. The addictions that grab us tightly in the palms of their hands, and refuse to loosen their grip. The fears that tie us up and hold us hostage. He emboldens us with his strength and power to walk in His ways, despite all of the ways we're tossed in the waves of this broken world.

He has been making a path for us from the very beginning. We started out beloved, we sinned and marred all the good things he envisioned for us, and he considered us beloved even still. So he made another way. He didn't abandon us when we didn't fit into His itinerary, paved a path for us to join Him anyway. He pardoned our inequities, and made a passageway from all that seems overwhelming, and painful, and hard, and that path leads straight to Him—a God whose love and grace for us is evergreen.

Of course, there are other paths, and we'll take them because they seem "safer" and in our finite wisdom, we think we know better. And when we do, there will be God—pursuing our hearts and drawing us back to Himself—shining a light onto the good path.

The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.

That verse brings rest to my weary soul. I can stop fighting. His paths may not always be easy, I may struggle to be faithful— but he never will.

Read exodus 13:21-14:4

Why do you think God provided a fire/cloud pillar to help guide the Israelites?

If the pillar was used to guide the Israelites, why do you think God found it important to speak to Moses about the direction they were traveling?

In what ways, in the last year, has your faith been significantly tested?

Can you think of something God has freed you from? What was that like? How did you know God was leading you?

In what way can the story of the Red Sea help us to be people that seek hope in difficult times?

There are times when we have to simply be still and let God work for us. That is certainly true in terms of our salvation, but on what other types of occasions? What practical tips can you share with one another in terms of 'let go and let God'?