

Remember!

Israel is surrounded by harsh inhospitable desert. She never forgot that once she had inhabited that fearsome place. It was in this wilderness that the Lord betrothed her to himself forever. Some of us also, were found by the Lord in “a barren and howling waste”.¹ The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob revealed himself to us and we were bonded to him in love and forgiveness.

Perhaps for some of us our first encounter with the Lord was not in some barren spiritual place but when we were, so to speak, happy and relaxed and all was well with the world apart from the fact that we were not in the kingdom of God. In the book of Deuteronomy amidst all the warnings about not forgetting the wilderness there is this verse, “be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”² That is true for us all however we first encountered God. It is a question as to which Kingdom we are in – the kingdom of Egypt (the world and its false values) or the kingdom of God. If we have drifted back into Egypt and who has not to a greater or lesser degree, sooner or later the Lord will tenderly lead us into the wilderness to draw us back to himself.

The temptation to forget was always there in God’s chosen people. When life became comfortable in the Promised Land and even for some prosperous, the precarious nomadic existence a thing of the past, then subtly the thought came, “my power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me”.³ Life became settled, apparently secure, houses were built and vineyards planted. The self-sufficient and self-satisfied have no need of God, Israel began to worship false gods and so do we. Comfort deadens the spirit and ultimately becomes an end in itself.

We know this temptation all too well as a community. Life is definitely more comfortable than it was when we first began and were penniless, not having a clue about anything including living together! We clung to God. They were our wilderness years. For true lovers of the Lord the cross is not so much a sign that we wear around our necks but a way of life branded on our hearts. “If anyone would come after me”, Jesus said, “he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”⁴ We “follow stumbling, hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed”, wrote St Paul.⁵ Not any encouragement to a laid back life style there!

On this way of the cross the lover finds the Beloved. Who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning on the arm of the Beloved, limping like Jacob.⁶ It is the bridal soul wooed by God in the place of pain and dereliction.



Remember Me

¹ Deut 32:10

² Deut 6:12

³ Deut 8:17

⁴ Mark 8:34

⁵ 2 Cor 4:8

⁶ Gen 32:31