

Intro:

I grew up in a family of hunters. My father's entire family was involved in the sport. I was born on the first day of deer season, Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, and to this day I am called "Bucky" by all my family members.

I remember every year my dad would go up north for deer season, and as each of my older brothers got old enough they would join him. Eventually it became my turn to enter into the manly tradition. Along with my father, brothers, uncles and grandfather we would gather at my uncle's cabin for a week of hunting.

The part of the experience that I recall most vividly is going out to hunt before dawn. We would rise very early and eat an amazing breakfast cooked by my Aunt. Then we would walk through the dark wood to reach our deer blinds before dawn. As I sat in total the silence and stillness of pre dawn in the northern woods of Michigan, my senses were on high alert for any motion or noise.

Each morning, if it were perfectly still without even a whisper of a wind, just before the sun would break the horizon a small breeze blow in advance of the sunrise. I noticed this many mornings. I have also experienced it at other times when I've been up before dawn on a very still morning – a breeze would precede the rising sun.

I've never done research to confirm this, but it makes perfect sense. The energy of the sunshine breaking over the horizon would push the air forward.

Think of this though – a constant breeze being pushed by the sun, around the globe. It is always dawn somewhere on the planet. A constant rising, a constant breeze – even when there is stillness. A constant advance announcing the rising of the sun! After the breeze there would follow a parade of birds out to feed in the early morning. Once they would pass some of the small woodland creatures would come out, squirrels and chipmunks. Then, if you were fortunate a deer or several deer would pass by. I never had the opportunity of seeing a buck while hunting, so I never got a deer. But the experience changed my life.

[Isa 40:3-5](#) The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. (4) Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; (5) The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see *it* together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

1. Prepare:

- a) Turn, look, prepare, regard, respect
- b) To turn, to turn toward, to turn and do

- c) To turn and look, look, look back or at or after or for
  - d) To make a turn, show signs of turning
2. In the Hebrew the reading is more accurately, “The voice of one crying, “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.”
- a) Wilderness is part of what the one crying says
  - b) Wilderness is descriptive of the call to prepare, not descriptive of the one crying out
  - c) So the voice of the prophet says, “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.”
    - In the wilderness turn, turn and do, turn and look, look, look!
3. How would this be experienced here and now?
- a) What would it look like
    - To turn, look and prepare?
  - b) What are we looking for?
  - c) What are you looking at???

**Mat 11:7-10** As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: **"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (8) But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. (9) But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. (10) For this is he of whom it is written: 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.'**

- 1. Jesus refers to the passage in Isaiah in reference to John the Baptist
  - a) “What did you go out into the wilderness to see?”
  - b) The same idea of wilderness, and looking – seeing
- 2. Wilderness = a place to see, the place of encounter
  - a) Moses encountered God in the wilderness when he turned and saw the burning bush
  - b) Jesus was driven into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit, where after He was tempted by Satan, He was ministered to by angels.
  - c) The Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness before entering the promised land
- 3. Wilderness is the place of preparation
  - a) It is the place where God meets us
  - b) It may be
    - a literal wilderness
    - A emotional wilderness
    - A financial wilderness
    - A relational wilderness
    - Or a spiritual wilderness
- 4. Wilderness is the place of testing
  - a) It is in this place of testing where we must prepare, we must “look, look, look.”

- b) It is the place where you must prepare, or like the generation of Israelites that left Egypt, be left for dead.
- c) A wilderness area is not a guarantee
  - All of Israel went out to see John the Baptist to hear his message
  - But not all received the message
  - All of Israel went out to see Jesus heal the sick but in three short years they were shouting “crucify him.”
- 5. The preparation that God requires is a turning and looking to Christ
  - a) It is the same message that John proclaimed, the Christ is coming  
The sun is rising, with healing in His wings...
  - b) The preparation required is a heart transformation that is not conditional on outward circumstances
  - c) That is why it occurs in the wilderness, a place devoid of other comforts and distractions
- 6. Revival comes to change hearts
  - a) The outward manifestations are only intended to get our attention
  - b) The inward transformation is what God is seeking, and is what endures

Conclusion:

1. I mentioned a few weeks ago, before we even knew about Lakeland, that Christianity is not about preserving the past, it is about preparing for the future.
  - a) My job is not to keep things the same, but to institute change
  - b) Missionary: “change agents”
  - c) We are all called to be agents of Change,
    - In our personal lives
    - In our communities
    - In our nation, and our generation
2. That very week, after I spoke those words, we had a leaders retreat for our association Partners In Harvest.
  - a) One of the themes that came out from many of those who spoke was this same idea
  - b) What we are all about is change – as an association of churches, we are defined by our willingness to embrace what God is doing NOW
  - c) I talked about this again, just last week.
  - d) What matters is what is happening NOW!!!
3. What is happening now, here at New Day, in Kalamazoo, across our nation and across the world is a sweeping move of God.
  - a) I believe it is like the wind I felt blow across the wilderness in advance of the rising sun
  - b) What is happening in Lakeland, and elsewhere, is not always subtle
  - c) But what God is doing is – like a gentle breeze that can be easily missed or ignored

- d) Many Christian will ignore what God is doing
  - e) They will see the evident errors, or imbalances of those who might be involved in a particular event or location and dismiss it as another Christian fad.
  - f) I am particularly cautious concerning Christian fads, as I've seen so many distract the Church over the years.
  - g) But when God moves – you must look, look, look.
  - h) Like Moses who saw the burning bush from afar and wondered why it didn't burn away, but kept burning. He turned and approached it, he drew near.
  - i) God is calling His church, He is calling you and I to draw near.
  - j) He uses revival to get our attention, so that we draw near to him
4. Application
- a) What does it look like to “Prepare the way of the Lord” in your life?
  - b) How might you “turn and look, look, look?”
    - Turn away from other things that normally distract you.
    - Turn away from what is comfortable and predictable and expected
    - Turn toward what God is doing, even though it may be unusual, uncomfortable and unexpected
  - c) Johnathan Edwards taught that true revival will
    - Increase one's love for God
    - Increase one's love for God's word
    - This will be manifested by a turning away from sin and anything in life that separates you from God
    - And a turning to works of righteousness that enables you to live closer to him.
  - d) Like the prophet crying out, like the breeze before the dawn, I encourage you to look, look, look, to prepare for Christ to appear in your life
    - To increase in your love for God and His word
    - To look for the Holy Spirit and how He might be revealing Jesus to you right now!
    - To turn from destructive, self-gratifying behavior, and turn to God in this day of revival.
    - Take advantage of every “wilderness” and encounter the living God, so that He might lead you into the promised land!