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See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland. to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise (Isaiah 43:19, 20b, 21 NIV).

Shalom Aleichem! (peace to you), Sisters and Brothers in Christ.

Lent is a great time for REFLECTION! I chose this scripture from one of my favorite books, Isaiah, because it echoes a bit of the “wasteland,” reminding us of a vast Judean desert and Jesus’ forty days of self-denial, fasting, being tempted by and triumphing over Satan! For Christians, it leads us to Maundy Thursday and to the foot of the cross, the end of 40 days.

As “His chosen people” then, we have been given the task of proclaiming the Good News with heartfelt praise. And oh, what a privilege. We are already two weeks into the season of Lent, our “priceless” forty days, leading up to Easter. I am using these weeks and this message to reflect and meditate on the inspiring connection between these forty days of Lent and Passover. Priceless, because Our Christ has paid the price of dying on the cross for us! That thought, in times of reflection, is so humbling, and we are found on our knees, at the foot of the Cross, living a life free, to wear and bear humility, in many acts of kindness to others.

In fact, let’s step back a moment and remember some traditional acts of penitence during Lent, overt practices also used by many religions: ***prayer, self-denial, fasting, reconciliation, abstinence, and almsgiving.*** Gone, a couple of generations at least now, is fasting and abstinence, for example: no meat on Fridays, just fish, and the jokes of “giving up chocolate and smoking.”

BUT the church is stepping up and seeing heart-warming, active, **living proof of almsgiving** in visible, community-wide action the likes of: Food-for-the-Homeless Drives and BUILD-A-BED for children, where we have opportunity to involve our children and church youth groups and step out at weekend family events in any or all of the above. *that they may proclaim my praise* (Isaiah 21b). And be witnesses, in blue jeans and winter parkas because folks, it’s still winter and Easter is really busy and early!

That is why, moving on in our hurried lives, I am so grateful to enjoy the fellowship, generosity, and kind hospitality of my huge church family, as we gather mid-week in the forty days, leading up to the Last Supper, with our “soup suppers,” the breaking of bread, family-style meals at sundown, before our evening worship service begins, on Wednesdays. There are seven opportunities, starting back on Ash Wednesday, to get acquainted with many new members, thank the kitchen crews, and see our precious youth, scurrying around in random acts of kindness for their church family, including “we Elders.” ☺

I know personally that I need to be continually reminded that I am not forging the way blindly...BUT that God already has ordered my steps and I follow after Him. And He makes the way. ***Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me (Psalm 119:133 NIV).*** ☺

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