

**PATTERNS**  
**By Elder Jenn Pearson**

Pattern: a repeated design or theme. Just as we saw the number pattern above you can think of God's creation and see a multitude of examples of patterns: the zebras stripes, the beehive combs, the spiders webs. All have a repeated and recognizable design. Our focus today is to look not at the pattern of creation but of the patterns seen in the creator: God.

Isaiah 35:

The desert and the parched land will be glad;  
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.  
Like the crocus, 2 it will burst into bloom;  
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.  
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,  
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;  
they will see the glory of the LORD,  
the splendor of our God.  
3 Strengthen the feeble hands,  
steady the knees that give way;  
4 say to those with fearful hearts,  
**“Be strong, do not fear;  
your God will come,  
he will come with vengeance;  
with divine retribution  
he will come to save you.”**  
5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.  
6 Then will the lame leap like a deer,  
and the mute tongue shout for joy.  
Water will gush forth in the wilderness  
and streams in the desert.  
7 The burning sand will become a pool,  
the thirsty ground bubbling springs.  
In the haunts where jackals once lay,  
grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.  
8 And a highway will be there;  
it will be called the Way of Holiness;  
it will be for those who walk on that Way.  
The unclean will not journey on it;  
wicked fools will not go about on it.  
9 No lion will be there,  
nor any ravenous beast;  
they will not be found there.  
But only the redeemed will walk there,  
10 and those the LORD has rescued will return.  
They will enter Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy will crown their heads.

Gladness and joy will overtake them,  
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

When I first looked at this verse I decided my best tactic to understand it was to break it down to a who, what, when, where strategy:

**When:** The time period is probably around 700 years before Christ.

**Who are our players:** At this time the major military powerhouse if you will in the area is Assyria. The best modern day analogy I can think to the Assyrians would be Germany during WWII.

**Where:** The Assyrians are basically moving along the fertile crescent taking what they want. Unfortunately, they have their eyes on Israel.

**The Details:** Israel and Assyrians. Initially it looks like win for Israel. At this period in history, Israel under the leadership of a praying, Godly king, the Assyrians do not take Jerusalem.

**But:** Unfortunately two things go against Israel. First the Assyrians aren't the only people wanting a piece of Israel's land. The Babylonians are around.

**Next,** as time goes by the people of Israel become sinful and they have turned from God. The people of Israel did not listen to the prophets who warned that the end was near. They did not heed the warning to turn back to God and away from their wickedness. The Babylonians army kicked in Jerusalem gate. The Jews were deported to Babylon under the watchful eye of their new masters.

Question: How to respond to forced exile and captivity??

They are a long way from home. Over 500 miles. As you would expect once they arrived in Babylon, people responded differently to their exile. Some tried to become Babylonian. A sort of when in Rome kind of thing.

But...A small part, even with everything going against them they didn't give up their rich heritage as God's chosen people. They are in Babylon and possibly a time for reflection had up. It is possible that they searched their hearts and remembered and told the stories of God's faithfulness. God bringing a most unlikely leader in terms of Moses who struggled with his speech to go before the mighty Pharaoh. God sent the plagues: the locusts, God spared the first born son of the Israelite. This God parted the Red sea and brought them out against all odds into a new life in the Promised Land.

Maybe they remember Exodus 6 which says *I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage.....I will be [b]your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.* 8

Could they dare to hope that if God had kept his promise to free their ancestor from the Egyptians would also free them from the Babylonians. That is exactly what God tells them and that what God does. After 70 years in captivity, the Babylonian Empire falls to the growing Persian army. The people are allowed to return to Israel and to rebuild the temple.

Going back to Isaiah 35. God has kept his promise: Verse 4

**Be strong, do not fear;  
your God will come,  
    he will come with vengeance;  
with divine retribution  
    he will come to save you.”**

I started our time together with the word “pattern.” The Israelite are freed from slavery in Egypt, the Babylonia captivity ends with rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Two examples of God coming to rescue his people in exile.

Where else do we see this pattern???

You don't have to go much further in Isaiah to look for another promise of God that he make and keeps.

Isaiah 40: 1-11:

Comfort, comfort my people,  
    says your God.

2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
    and proclaim to her  
that her hard service has been completed,

**that her sin has been paid for,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.**

3 A voice of one calling:

“In the wilderness prepare  
    the way for the LORD[a];  
make straight in the desert  
    a highway for our God.[b]

4 Every valley shall be raised up,  
    every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level,  
    the rugged places a plain.

5 And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
    and all people will see it together.

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

6 A voice says, “Cry out.”

    And I said, “What shall I cry?”

“All people are like grass,  
    and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.

7 The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
    because the breath of the LORD blows on them.  
Surely the people are grass.

8 The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
    but the word of our God endures forever.”

9 You who bring good news to Zion,  
    go up on a high mountain.

You who bring good news to Jerusalem,<sup>[c]</sup>  
lift up your voice with a shout,  
lift it up, do not be afraid;  
say to the towns of Judah,  
“Here is your God!”

**10 See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power,  
and he rules with a mighty arm.  
See, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense accompanies him.  
11 He tends his flock like a shepherd:  
He gathers the lambs in his arms  
and carries them close to his heart;  
he gently leads those that have young.**

This is of course the Promise of Jesus. Who will tend his flock like a shepherd and gather the lambs in his arms. A Jesus who healed the sick and raised the dead. This Jesus who the people chose to execute over the criminal Barnabas. The Jesus e betrayal by Judas and the denial by Peter still willingly goes to the cross. And it is as you know in the sacrifice that when are saved.

So in the beginning of the sermon I asked you to find a pattern. I will challenge you to study the patterns of how a loving God always reaches out to bring his people back from exile and into a loving relationship with Him. Even if it means sacrificing his beloved Son.

Anyone who has put a few years on this Earth know that real life contains a multitude of examples of being exiled. I once had the amazing opportunity to have breakfast with to hear Richard Noble Bloodsworth, a fisherman on the eastern shore of Maryland has a story that speaks strongly of a modern day exile.

Bloodsworth, a honorably discharged Marine with no criminal history, was wrongfully convicted of raping and murdering a young girl in the 1980s. He lived in a cell underneath the prison’s gas chamber while serving two of his 11 years on death row. In his words, It was “God-awful”

His conviction was based on the eye witness testimony of 2 individuals, one of which was a child. Because of the crime he was convicted of he was despised by the other inmates and harassed with unbelievable acts of cruelty daily. For years he held on, writing letters proclaiming his innocence. His time in prison was spent talking with visiting priests and reading everything he could get his hands on, including reading completely through the Bible twice. Not only was he exiled from his family and friends he was labeled with the most despised of labels. A twice convicted child rapist and murderer.

If that wasn't bad enough, another exile was around the corner for him. In a moment of despair Bloodsworth reached out for relief from the daily inhumanity he faced. Unfortunately, he found it in the form of prison drugs. He quickly found himself in debt to dealers, his few possessions sold to pay for his habit and his life instead of representing a innocent man falsely accused he fit in more and more with the criminal element. When a religious friend reaches out and said. “I thought you were innocent, I thought you were different” a light turned on for Bloodsworth.

“That afternoon he [Bloodsworth] told Sergeant Cooley Hall that he was sick and in

danger from the inmates; he asked to be locked down in protective custody. For a week he lay under the bunk in his cell writhing with cramps, vomited, wracked with the seats, grasping on to the rails, holding on. He detoxed alone, with one one to help or even sympathize. After that he never touched the drugs again.”

His story of exile is finally going to turn. A young idealist public defender from West Virginia gets lucky and finds some evidence that can be tested using the DNA technology. Bloodsworth relays the following conversation. He lawyer calls and says' Hey we got the DNA test, your excluded, your innocent. Bloodsworth response: “Yeah, I know that.” Today Richard Bloodsworth is a spokesman for the Innocent Project. His story and his place in history as the first person released from death row using DNA evidence make him a powerful advocate for reform. The DNA not only cleared Bloodsworth it also found the real killer.

Let us follow the pattern seen in Exodus, seen in Isaiah and seen in the life of Richard Noble Bloodsworth. Trusting in God. The God that saves.

I want to end with the question of what do we do when we are exiled? I want to answer that with a poem is by Charles Hanson Towne called Around the Corner. Towne writes not about God but about a friend.

*Around the corner I have a friend  
In this great city that has no end.  
Yet the days go by and weeks rush on,  
And before I know it, a year is gone.  
And I never see my old friend's face,  
For life is a swift and terrible race.  
He knows I like him just as well  
As in the days when I rang his bell,  
And he rang mine.*

*"Tomorrow" I say "I will call on Jim."  
"Just to show that I'm thinking of him."  
But tomorrow comes and tomorrow goes,  
And distance between us grows and grows.*

*Around the corner!-yet miles away,  
"Here's a telegram sir-"  
"Jim died today."  
And that's what we get and deserve in the end.  
Around the corner, a vanished friend.*

Don't let God be like a vanished friend. He has shown a pattern of loving his people and coming to their rescue. Our job is to be faithful and to wait remembering verse 4 of Isaiah 35. **Be strong and do not fear.....He will come and save.**