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## LIFE IS PRAISE

What does it mean to you that wild beasts honor God through the simple act of drinking the water He gives?

How are others blessed by the rivers He gives to you as drink in the desert?

How can you choose to live your daily life declaring His praise in what you think, say, and do?

**Isaiah 43:20-12** – <sup>20</sup>The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, <sup>21</sup>the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

### 1) **Hope...**

God instructs us to tell His story in three specific ways. He wants us to expect Him to be faithful, live boldly, and be content. Our defining story is told by how we live. It expresses what we actually believe, not what we want to or say we believe. Our story affirms or refutes what we claim. We must express hope, faith, and joy in our thoughts, words, and actions, or we deny the will of God. He sets before us an example, one that cannot mislead us or deceive itself. Wild creation has no choice other than hope and faith. It has no concept of providing for itself nor remaking its environment. Life itself is an act of praise. Are we courageous enough to follow its example?

◆ **Sustenance:** Wild beasts do not pray, sing worship songs, or many of the other forms of religion we hold dear. Yet God exalts them, saying “The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches

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(Isaiah 43:20).” The illustration is simple and forceful. Lives of praise are not distinct actions set apart from daily life. They are daily life without deception and pretense. Wild beasts praise God by seeking and finding the water He “give[s] in the wilderness (v20).” They do not fret about water, go to their neighbor for water, or pack up to relocate in hopes of finding water. They live in the wilderness in which they are born and expect God to provide them water. He does. They drink. Our lives tell His story of provision when we live hopefully, expecting our physical, emotional, and spiritual sustenance wherever we are.

◆**Life:** Water, the scarce essential element of life. The essence of our dependence on God. Air is everywhere we naturally go. Fresh, life-giving water is nowhere until God carries it on His clouds and delivers it in His storms. Nowhere. Lakes drain, rivers empty. Water is the divine gift of life sustained. God delights in the honor He receives when all creation partakes in His “water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert (v20),” ongoing miracles only He can produce, without which we perish. Drink as an act of hope within a life of praise.

## II) Faith...

God claims those of us to whom He has revealed Himself. He claims us as we are, not as we should be. He risks His reputation, His glory, by choosing us before transforming and without manipulating us. He unconditionally provides life’s essence to us. He invites us to expect Him to be faithful and live in the knowledge we are His beloved. Wild animals benefit from His generosity and faithfulness, but it is a gift for us, His literal provision of life and miraculous emblem of love. His choice to sustain us so that we can bear His name.

◆**Promise:** There are many wonders so constant we take them for granted. Snowy peaks, sunny beaches, lush forests. These should be constant reminders of God’s creative mind and unfathomable power. He knows we will forget to ponder Him through them. He uses a backdrop of desolation, a scene evocative of lifelessness, to remind us. He forms “rivers in the desert (v20),” something unknown if not for life being in the desert. He brings together life and life’s essence in an otherwise barren place. Wherever we go He will be and sustain us. He is there “to give drink to my chosen people (v20).” The rest of creation is blessed by our presence and the excess of His generosity. Life as praise is giving life from the expected abundance of it that He promises to us.

◆**Purpose:** Faith is the act of giving from our expectations. Acting as if His promises are certain. As if His stated purpose for our lives is

real. As if I am included in His chosen. Our actions manifest His promise and we inhabit His purpose when we decide we are one of His. He acts continually, works in the present tense, saying “I give water...to give drink to my chosen people (v20).” Those who thirst, drink. Receiving the gift is the first act of life as praise. All else we might do is purposeless if we do not first choose to drink His life.

## III) Joy...

Joy is not actualized without action. The thought, word, or deed confirming the life given by the water. The jackal and ostrich honor God by drinking and being sustained. The act of continuing to pursue life. Life is joyful because it is chosen. We have the power to choose life because He first chose us. Joy is the acknowledgement of these interwoven fibers of His choice and ours into the thread of life. The joyous life is praise.

◆**Treasured:** We need to distinguish life from survival. It’s easy to mindlessly survive in the modern world. To go about doing what we see others doing without thought as to why and what end. This sort of existence imitates hope and faith but is betrayed for base survival by the lack of joy. Joy that everything received is freely and graciously given out of love. Joy from being loved. Joy from being treasured. When we decide to include ourselves as one of God’s chosen, we know we are one of “the people whom I formed for myself (v21).” That He sustains us this instant is a willful act confirming His acceptance of us. He continues to find us adequate, worthy, lovely. Knowing He chooses to sustain the life we desire is joy.

◆**Gratitude:** Most of us have an innate need to reciprocate generosity. For some it is sensed as an obligation we have been taught. Others of us recognize it as an instinctive response, like blinking to abrupt brightness. The reaction of gratitude. A life of praise. All the ways we are taught as laws are reinterpreted as our instinctual reactions of hope, faith, and joy. We live expecting God to do what He has promised. We give from this expectation as though it is already received. We live content like those to whom we have given while we wait to perceive that God has fulfilled His promise. We choose to receive His sustenance and live. We rejoice knowing life itself is evidence of His love. We satisfy His will “that they might declare my praise (v21).” We praise Him as we live grateful for life worth living.