HEAVEN WAITS #1: *the GIFT*

✨***Is 43:2-4 "'Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you. I have called your name. You are Mine. When you are in over your head, I'll be there with you. When you are in rough waters, you will not go down. When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end— Because I am God, your personal God, The Holy of Israel, your Savior. I paid a huge price for you: all of Egypt, with rich Cush and Seba thrown in! That's how much you mean to Me! That's how much I love you! I'd sell off the whole world to get you back, trade creation just for you."' (MSG)***✨

I have a brand-new year before me. You do too. It is a year that has never been trampled on by mankind. The only One who has been into this year before either of us is a Holy God, the Holy God who has already walked in our future and gone ahead into our tomorrow. He has trekked there to prepare it for us, to protect us from whatever it might hold, to provide for us the means to navigate any pathway that falls before us.

The new year that is now in front of us is a clean slate. It is untethered by a past that I once allowed to define me. It is unrestricted simply because of the newness it has to offer. It is a bare canvas, a blank space, a spotless void, an unused margin, an un-smudged blackboard without even an eraser mark yet. The freshness of the year before you and before me hasn't even been realized yet. There's not been a trip or a blunder or a blemish; the year ahead is laundered, squeaky clean, immaculate, and the only thing cautious about it, is the unknown, and what we will do with it.

It sits in front of me like an unopened gift, handed to me by a Holy God. He has hidden great things in this 'present' He is gifting to me. And I must unwrap it, layer by layer, to unearth the surprises inside. He promises He has a purpose just for me. I am created by design, however, what I choose to do with the trappings He has wrapped within this year and given to me, is up to me. I may waste the design He bested for me, or I may use it for my good and someone else's good, and for His glory. He promises a newness in Him. He promises goodness. He promises fulfillment. He promises a joy that comes even in the mourning. In fact, His whole gift to me is filled with nothing but glorious and mysterious promise for my year ahead.

All of us just walked through the Christmas season and the end of a year aptly passed. Even if our circumstances weren't what we want them to be, we all are receivers of the gift of a new year before us, a song that is unsung is within you; perhaps an unwritten story within me. There is a new beginning waiting right around the corner for someone who has been hindered by an ill-fitting life they have outgrown. For another, the gift she holds in her hands might contain forgiveness, and for him, perhaps it is grace. Whatever is needed by each one of us individually is carefully placed in the confines of your gift and mine and is ready to be unveiled as we step into a new year. Best of all, I sit in awe of this gift before me. I'm in awe that a Holy God—the God of the Universe, the One who created me and who also slipped into my humanity so He could 'get' me, that Holy God, who came down from heaven, stepped out of glory into my forlorn place so He could restore me to my Heavenly Father, *that God* would choose to give me an eternal gift. I eagerly unwrap this year before me, and say, "***Whatever***, Lord, that You have for me, I am all in."

Psalm 18:19 'He stood me up in a wide-open field. I stood there saved, surprised to be loved!' (MSG)