

40 Days of Prayer and Fasting

November 8th

Daily Devotional #39

We Are in the Season of DEDICATION

As We Ask, “What Is GOD Preparing Us/for Us to Do?”

*O God, You are my God,
Earnestly I seek You,
My soul thirsts for You,
My body longs for You...
Because Your love is better than life
my lips will glorify You*

Psalm 63:1a & 3 (NIV84)

In the Fall of 1993, I took a course under Dr. Gailyn Van Rheenen titled, “Ministry of Redemption.” It was purposefully challenging to our (as one writer puts it) “Xerox-style thinking” and forced us to consider what we knew, what we believed, and how we live out the life of GOD. One of the major assignments was to work through the eight tenets of faith: God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Church, Time, Humanity, Salvation, and evil. While I eventually made through all eight, I pretty much got stuck on number one: thinking, re-thinking, and re-thinking again the character and importance of this One we are Dedicating ourselves to... this One we call GOD.

It strikes me today, that this same wrestling may be good for us – each of us and all of us – to engage in, again, as we consider Dedication and what comes after our 40 Days. May we continue to search for, wrestle with, and have deeper faith in GOD. As Carrie Hays reminded me the other day, through a quote from the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, (I paraphrase here), GOD may not be “safe” (as we consider our ideas of “human safety”), but He most certainly is good. And GOD’s good is good for the soul, for eternity, and most definitely, for His Church!

Tenet 1 – God

Who is God? Indeed. As crucial as this question is for each manifest soul to answer, so it is as ridiculous and vain to attempt. And yet, attempt we must. As I consider, I will focus on three passages of Holy Scripture - Genesis 1, Luke 15:11-32, Deuteronomy 31:1-8 - and one book of Holy Scripture - Revelation.

In Genesis 1 I see the Creator of the Universe and His incredible love for an infinitesimally small humanity. God, the Creator, the Master Planner formed the universe and caused it to be and run in perfect order. Trillions of stars and planets,

galaxy after galaxy, innumerable distances and reaches stretching across the known universe, and all we really know is there is more than we can now see or believe. And in the midst of this great expanse God stopped and touched the dust and formed it into the focus of His love - me! Us! Humans!

We are created by the Creator of the Universe! We are "fearfully and wonderfully" made. We are purposeful in origin. He wanted to create me/us. He took delight in creating me/us. And I know that (somehow) He takes great delight in me/us. This wonder continues when I look at the intricate complexity of our planet. Imagine a God so powerful that He designed photosynthesis so that plants can harvest the energy of a burning ball of hydrogen over 93,000,000 miles away. This same God invented light so that we could see the brilliant artistry within and behind His creation... and so that we could see the rich beauty, artistry, and masterful diversity of one another.

I could go on and on about the overwhelming beauty of the Grand Canyon, or birds and their feathers, or the depth of the ocean, or the power of a tornado, or the way fish extract oxygen from water, or how our skin heals itself, or how we hear or feel or speak. All of these complexities demonstrate God's wonderful creativeness. And that He chose to love us - me - demonstrates His commitment.

A few final words on God's incredible creativity in a slightly different (and yet, true to His character) perspective: God is creative in His commitment to His people. In 1 Samuel chapters 4 - 6 there is an incredible story of God's creative commitment to His purpose. The ark had been stolen and His people overrun by the Philistines. Israel was too weak to do anything about it. No matter - God is God, and that's all we need. God, in His wonderful sense of originality first causes Dagon, the Philistine god to fall prostrate before the Ark. Then God uses rats and hemorrhoids to force the Philistines to give up the ark and return it to its home - with the followers, the people of God. This creative commitment is shown over and over. David and Goliath, Jonathan and his armor bearer, Gideon, the birth of Isaac, Elisha and the Arameans, Balaam's donkey, Jehoshaphat's victory, and on and on. There is nothing that God cannot do with grand creativity! In fact, God is so creative and committed to His people, that He even chooses to exercise His power, His creative victory in and through His people (Ephesians 3:20-21)!

As I consider God's incredible, faithful and loving commitment, I am reminded of and struck by the parable of the prodigal son. I see here that God's commitment is not dependent upon my righteousness - for comparatively speaking, I have none. Nor is His commitment dependent upon my faithfulness - for surely my lack of faith is great. No, God's faithfulness is His own and dependent upon and issued from His perfectly loving Self. His forgiving is a gift. And it is available to all who will "come home". It interests me, also, to see God's response to a child coming home. He runs. He does not wait until we crawl back on our hands and knees. He does not beat us into submission. Rather, when He sees us - still far off - coming home, He runs to

meet us and take us in His arms and shower us with love, blessing, and Family belonging.

As wonderfully graceful, gentle and loving as God is, we must not - I must not - forget His absolute holiness. While it is true that God is abounding in love and slow to anger, He does demand obedience and He does punish (Exodus 34:6-7). It is a free grace that we receive, but it is not cheap. God is jealous and desirous to have us - completely. And that is right and good... For it is in His wanting that He forgives. It is in His thundering velvet hand that I am brought back to what is good and right - Him and His love. It is in holiness that I see the "other side" and I desire Him, my Father, to hold me close and protect me (Psalm 63).

This faithfulness is also seen in Deuteronomy 31:1-8. Here it is plain to see that it is God who is faithful to His promises to His people. He will never leave nor forsake. It is when I look back and see the rich history of Israel that I see the powerful hand of God leading at every turn. God is big enough to control all of history, it is His! Our response is to humbly submit to His power and love. I believe it is this that brings peace and strength and courage. The battle (whatever battle it may be) is the Lord's. The day is His. The moment is His. And ultimately He will win (Revelation). God is victor and conqueror, therefore, I shall fear no evil, for nothing is greater than He. I find peace in this God. I believe this is how David felt as he penned Psalm 63. To be in God is to be secure. God can be trusted fully. He is good to His promise. He cannot be unfaithful. He is, above all, faithful.