

THE FIRST 15

Monday, July 1, 2024

Today is Monday, July 1 and we are studying what the Bible says about still waters.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy and loving God, in the midst of a busy day, I pause to find a place of quiet rest. I calm my scattered thoughts and slow my breath. I seek the green pastures and still waters you promise. Show me what it means to have a Sabbath heart and discover the inner peace you provide. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalm 23:1-6 (RSV)

REFLECTION

During the summer months we are slowing down to enjoy a lengthy reflection on a beloved Psalm - Psalm twenty-three. The summer season is an opportunity for us to join together, seek a Sabbath heart and discover the inner peace and soulful rest God desires for us. This week we reflect on the words, "He leads me beside still waters." The writer of the Psalm, David, grew up shepherding his father Jesse's sheep. He is familiar with the life and duties of a shepherd. David sees God as a capable and faithful Shepherd who looks out for the best interests of the flock he loves.

What does David mean by still waters? A shepherd knows that sheep are afraid of running water. They will not drink from a fast moving stream. Sheep cannot swim very well, and if they fall into a deep, swift moving river, the sheep would probably not survive. For us, life can be such a river. Everyday life moves so fast and so loud it creates anxiety in our minds and fear in our hearts. Life does not wait patiently, but demands our time, attention and energy. Even when a river does not slow its rapid flow, the compassionate shepherd will gather up stones and divert some of the fast moving water into a small, still pool for the sheep to drink. The Good Shepherd wants to create a place for us to drink peacefully from the Living Water he provides.

Our Savior longs to give us peace, rest, and refreshment. Jesus leads us to where the water is pure, clear, and almost motionless so we can renew ourselves in Him. It is a place where we can slow down and rest, be quiet and still and intimately experience his deep, pure love. Because the water is so calm, we can step in, wade around and immerse ourselves in his goodness and quench our spiritual thirst. We are unable to experience the serene power of Christ's still waters or satisfy our thirst when we only focus on our crowded schedules, lengthy

to-do lists and busy lives. We must actively seek Christ every day so he can lead us to frequent places of rest to nourish, strengthen and prepare us for the good work he has for us to do.

Ask: What are the still waters Jesus is inviting me to enjoy in his presence today? How might the Good Shepherd want me to stop for rest and refreshment?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy Lord God, thank you for loving me and caring for me so well. You provide what I need and bring me to places of peace and refreshment. I entrust my entire self to your loving care - body, mind and spirit. I place my life in your hands. Teach me to lie down in your green pastures, enjoy the still waters in my midst, and rest in contentment. You have provided places of blessing that I tend to rush past and overlook during a busy day. Reveal the spaces of restful joy all around me and show me how to relax in your love. Amen.