

THE FIRST 15

Thursday, July 4, 2024

Today is Independence Day 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

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:14-16

REFLECTION

Believers in Christ as well as the church (the body of believers) are together involved in a growth process - a process in which individuals become more like Jesus Christ and the church grows up into a holy temple in which God dwells. Jesus wants his disciples to root their lives in him and bear good fruit for the kingdom. Sometimes churches stop growing spiritually and fail to mature corporately as disciples. In the New Testament this is evidenced by the rotten fruit of pride, jealousy, dissension, division and quarreling. In stagnant churches there is a lack of understanding of the deeper truths of God, a lack of interest in advancing in the faith and a lack of motivation to exercise love and serve the world. Churches whose growth is stunted become subject to false teaching and are swayed by fleeting trends.

Paul used the image of being tossed by the winds and waves of troubled waters to warn Christ followers about instability. We are to glide on still waters of truth and anchor ourselves in the word of God. God does not desire me or my church to remain babes in the faith - tossed back and forth, blown here and there, without stable grounding in truth or solid foundation of teaching. God wants me and my church to become mature, speak the truth and grow to become in every respect more like Jesus Christ. We are Christ's body and he is the head of his church. Jesus is in charge. The church belongs to him. We are joined together in Christ and held together by Christ. We are to build up one another in love - and each of us has an important role to play. I must be working together with fellow believers in my church to realize God's amazing vision for my particular community.

I consider what God is revealing to me today about me and/or my local church. Which words resonate the most with my soul. Words like infants, tossed, and blown? Or words like growing, mature, joined together, and built up? Perhaps God wants me to gain awareness of my places

of spiritual immaturity. Maybe God wants to invite me to invest more in helping my local church grow strong. Perhaps God is warning me about false teaching, cunning, craftiness or those who scheme and deceive people with their lies. Maybe God wants me to trust in the still waters of his truth, spoken in love.

Ask: Am I anchored in the faith and gliding on the still waters of truth? Or am I tossed back and forth by wavers of doubt and blown here and there by winds of falsehood?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed Lord God, speak the truth in love to me today. Reveal the places where I am weak, infantile, unsteady, and easily swayed by falsehood. Caution me in places where my knowledge and faith are lacking. I want to grow alongside other believers to become spiritually mature and be built into a holy temple for you. I invite you into the waywardness of my heart and mind. Steady the reeling confusion of competing thoughts, set my feet on a firm foundation and speak absolute truth into my heart. Grant me wisdom and understanding so I may grow strong in the faith and be anchored in my beliefs. Amen.