

THE FIRST 15

Thursday, June 27, 2024

Today is Thursday, June 27 and we are studying what the Bible says about rest and renewal.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy and loving Lord, amid the pressures of another busy day with the many plans, activities, appointments, and demands, I pause to find a place of rest. I close my eyes and seek the calming peace of your abiding presence. I breathe deeply, in and out, allowing myself to relax in a quiet space of serene stillness. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. Mark 6:39-42

REFLECTION

Many people saw Jesus traveling on foot with the disciples. They ran from their towns and villages to follow them into the countryside. Jesus saw the large crowd that had gathered on the remote hillside. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd and began teaching them. He taught until it was late in the day. After so many hours the people were hungry. Jesus asked his disciples to give them something to eat and they were befuddled how they could possibly find enough food for so many people. A little boy offered his meager lunch - five loaves of bread and two small fish. From such a small amount, Jesus miraculously fed five thousand men plus women and children.

Before he blessed the offering, Jesus had the people sit down on the "green grass" (Mark 6:39). Just as the twenty third Psalm says the Good Shepherd makes us lie down in green pastures, Jesus directed the people to sit down on the green grass of the hillside. It is time for rest. It is time for refreshment. It is time for renewal. It is time for nourishment. Jesus is equipped to satisfy the hunger of the people - the hunger of the body and the hunger of the soul.

Before he blessed the loaves and the fish, Jesus directed the people to sit down on the green grass "in groups." Groups of hundreds and fifties. They are not sitting on the green grass alone. They are in community with other followers. That is how they are fed. In the same way, Jesus invites me to find rest and renewal in the presence of other followers. I am invited to sit down in the green pastures with my brothers and sisters in Christ. That is how I am fed the good food Jesus provides - sharing the blessing of fellowship in community. Rest and renewal happens in the body of believers. We encourage one another to stop, rest, and delight in the spiritual nourishment Jesus provides. There is more than enough for everyone.

I imagine listening to Jesus' teaching in the heat of the day, my stomach beginning to feel empty, knowing that I have a long journey home before I will have something to eat. Jesus invites me to sit down on the soft green grass with the other people who are gathered there. They were strangers to me, but now we are here together, with Jesus. These are friends. Jesus takes the five loaves of bread and the two fish. He gives thanks to God and breaks the bread. The loaves and fish are distributed. There is enough for everyone. There is enough for me. I eat. I am satisfied. I consider how Jesus might want me to stop today, sit down on the good green grass, enjoy fellowship with Christians friends and find the spiritual nourishment he provides.

Ask: Is my soul hungry, weary, tired or lonely? How could I find time today to stop, rest, enjoy fellowship and receive the good food Jesus offers?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, like the crowd of five thousand, I too am a sheep in need of a shepherd. Have compassion on me, teach me, bless me with your presence and feed my hungry soul. You are my Lord and Shepherd. Make me lie down in your green pastures. Lead me beside your peaceful waters. Remind me to stop and rest on the good green grass. Bring me into fellowship with believers who love and serve you. Bless, break and distribute the bread of heaven. Nourish my spirit, refresh my soul and renew me in your love. Amen.