

THE FIRST 15

Monday, July 8, 2024

Today is Monday, July 8 and we are learning what the Bible says about restoration.

OPENING PRAYER

As I enter a time of prayer, I pause and become still. I calm my mind and quiet my heart. I breathe deeply and slowly, and center myself upon the presence of my Lord and Shepherd. In utter trust and confidence, I turn to the God who loves me who has the power to restore my soul. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. 1 Kings 19:4b-8

REFLECTION

During the summer months we are slowing down to enjoy a lengthy reflection on a beloved Psalm - Psalm twenty-three. This week we reflect on the words, "He restores my soul." We look to God's Holy Word to see how the prophets of old experienced restoration. In the Old Testament book of First Kings, there is a suspenseful, dramatic scene. The prophet Elijah is running for his life. He has infuriated Queen Jezebel and she sends her henchmen to execute him. Elijah travels on foot an entire day's journey into the barren wilderness outside of the town of Beersheba. He is tired, hungry, thirsty, exhausted and afraid. He can go no further. He must stop. Elijah finds a little bit of shade and rests under a native shrub called a broom bush.

Like Elijah, I am also on a journey. I may not be running for my life, escaping violent people who want to kill me, but I am on a journey. I travel through life confronting challenges, facing dangers, realizing fears, and coping with uncertainty. Sometimes my wilderness journey may seem lonely. I acknowledge that like Elijah I too can feel tired and afraid. There are days (maybe today is one of them) when I just do not want to keep pressing forward. I can go no further. The journey is too much for me. When my spirits are low, I need the refreshment only God can supply. God has the sustenance to restore me. God provides the nourishment to refuel me for the journey that lies ahead.

The angel comes to Elijah not once but twice. Both times the angel touches him and tells him to get up and eat. Elijah eats and drinks as he is instructed. He is strengthened by those two small meals to travel an entire forty day journey. How far will I be able to go with the strength God wants to supply me?

Elijah's destination is Mt. Horeb, a sacred and holy place where he is destined to meet God. It occurs to me that God supplies Elijah with exactly what he needs to complete his God-given journey. In my own life, I remember that God will supply me with exactly what I need to complete my God-given journey. God knows my needs better than I know them myself. God knows my limitations better than I know them myself. What am I in "short supply" of? What am I trying to accomplish in my own strength and power? Where do I need to acknowledge my limitations?

I imagine waking in the cool shade of a tiny broom tree to the smell of freshly baked bread and the sight of sparkling clear water. What do the bread and water represent to me? What exactly is it that I need in order to have the strength for my particular life journey? I can count on God to supply me with what I need, even if he needs to come back around more than once and replenish the supply. When I get tired God restores me.

Ask: What part of my journey makes me weary and tired today? What part of my journey is too much for me?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving God, as Elijah sat down under the broom bush and prayed, I sit before you and pray. I confess there are places in my life where I too have "had enough." When I imagine what lies ahead, I worry that part of my journey is too much for me. I need strength to go the distance and live the life you are calling me to live. I confess that I try to go forward in my own power and do not rely on your sustenance and strength. I invite you into my circumstances and ask you for the good food - what angels prepare for hungry souls. Restore me to go the distance. Amen.