

THE FIRST 15

Tuesday, July 9, 2024

Today is Tuesday, July 9 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

So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat." Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:30-37

REFLECTION

One afternoon Jesus miraculously feeds five thousand people with a boy's small lunch and that same evening he walks on water crossing the Sea of Galilee on foot. The crowd that witnessed these miracles travel in search of him looking for more food and further miracles. They want signs and wonders. They want manna from heaven like Moses fed their ancestors in the desert. They search for the bread of earth but Jesus tells them about a different kind of bread, the bread of heaven.

When I am physically tired, weary or weak, food restores me and gives me strength. When I am spiritually tired, weary or weak, I hunger for a different sort of food. I need spiritual food - the kind that restores my soul. As I go through life, I am sometimes aware of an inner emptiness that is part of the human condition. I try to fill this emptiness with the things of this world. Some of those things may be good, although temporary, other things may actually be harmful. Unfortunately, I never find myself completely satisfied, but return again and again to spiritual hunger. Jesus promises me something more. Jesus promises me bread from heaven. The bread of life. A bread that will fulfill my deepest longings. Partaking of this bread means I will never be hungry, but ultimately completely satisfied.

The crowd wants Jesus to provide more bread for them to eat. What do I want Jesus to provide me? I recall how the people of Israel grumbled to Moses for food when they were starving in the desert. Moses prayed to God for sustenance and God sent manna from heaven to feed the people in the wilderness. Now Jesus provides another feeding miracle - five thousand people are fed with only five loaves and two fish.

What does this bread represent to me? What is the bread that I want in my life? What do I most long for deep in my soul? What do I need God to provide that will bring me restoration? What will give me nourishment and strength? Have I experienced the sweetness of a relationship with Jesus in such a way that I cry out along with the people in the crowd, "Sir, always give me this bread." A continuous supply - like manna. Jesus tells me very simply how I am to receive the bread that he offers. Whoever comes to him, he explains, will be fed. I lift my soul to Jesus and invite him to fill me and make me whole. Bread of Heaven, feed me til I want no more.

Ask: Am I aware of the hunger of my soul, a hunger that is only temporarily satisfied with the things of this world? What do I indulge in in an attempt to fill the emptiness inside me?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I confess that I am like the people in the crowd, seeking after the material benefits of this world and wanting you to supply my temporal needs. You promise me something far greater than what the world provides. I am no longer satisfied with a secular diet. I ask for the "true bread from heaven" and the life that you bring. Satisfy my hunger, quench my deepest thirst, fill me full. Jesus, Bread of Life, I come to you longing to be fed, longing to be filled. Restore me and make me whole. Bring me to a place where I no longer hunger and thirst, but rest satisfied and complete with you. Amen.