

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, October 2, 2024

By: Brenda Beaver

Today is Wednesday, October 2, and we are learning what the Bible says about Cornerstone.

May the cornerstone of my life, and our life together, be Christ and Christ alone.

OPENING PRAYER

The Call to Prayer: "Sing praise to the LORD who dwells in Zion; proclaim to the peoples the things he has done. May God be merciful to us and bless us."

Psalm 9:11; Psalm 67:1

Lord God, Almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Phyllis Tickle, "The Divine Hours: A Manual for Prayer"

SCRIPTURE

Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem. You boast, "We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place." So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place. Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it." Isaiah 28:14-19

REFLECTION

In today's scripture passage, the prophet Isaiah is delivering an oracle to the religious leaders of the southern kingdom of Judah, who are unable to deliver God's message to the people because of their drunken, irreverent behavior and their unwillingness to hear God's words, words of justice and strength that would bring about their well-being. Instead, they mock the prophet as he speaks the word of the Lord to them. Isaiah now tells of the impending doom that will soon befall them. The rulers in Jerusalem live in false security, unafraid of the threatened disaster, thinking that they have made a trusted alliance with Egypt for protection against the conquering Assyrians. The "covenant with death, and with the grave" is referencing the false belief that powerful foreign Egypt will protect God's people by bringing death to the advancing Assyrian army, and would therefore bring about a safe refuge for the people to remain in their homeland of Judah. Isaiah confronts the leaders and the people about their false trust, their dependence upon "lies," as they have placed confidence in a foreign country for their protection and not in the true security provided by the Lord God, the cornerstone. The religious leaders

believe that the “overwhelming scourge” (the armies of Assyria) will “sweep by” Jerusalem and leave them untouched. God will test the people’s refusal to trust solely in him by the standard of his justice and righteousness. The people of Jerusalem are doomed.

Isaiah clearly is referring to the ‘laying of the stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious stone for a sure foundation’ as the coming Messiah, Jesus. Once again, a scriptural reference to a cornerstone parallels the crucial stone that is laid in the construction of a building. It is the “rock” upon which the weight of the whole structure rests. The entire weight of our faith rests on Jesus, the foundation stone. And, just as it was in Isaiah’s day, God continues to be gracious and forgiving; the foretelling of the coming of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, as the cornerstone upon whom we place our trust for our salvation, is our true security. Thanks be to God for the blessing of our cornerstone, Jesus Christ!

Ask: In what ways have we placed our faith in Jesus Christ, the true cornerstone, today?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour upon your church the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Phyllis Tickle, “The Divine Hours: A Manual for Prayer”