

THE FIRST 15

Monday, September 30, 2024

By: Brenda Beaver

Today is Monday, September 30, and we are learning what the Bible says about Cornerstone.

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

OPENING PRAYER

Tell me about creation, Lord. Did continents split and crash against each other, pushing up mountain peaks?

Did the oceans seethe and boil in tempests, submerging tropic isles?

Did ice sheets scrape across the land, leaving scars in their wakes?

Were day and night all one until your powerful hand set in motion a rotating earth with warming sun and shining moon, and tides and seasons more precise than the navigator's eye?

Did warm winds blow amid tall grasses over high plains? Or slow-flowing rivers cut out canyons with rock walls, rising to the sun?

Or did it all occur in a twinkling of your mighty eye, as quiet as a butterfly's silken wings, pulsating in flight?

Tell me, my Lord, my Cornerstone of Faith. I am listening.

Adapted from "Chambers of My Heart," by Dorothy Longmire Davis

SCRIPTURE

Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" Job 38:1-7

REFLECTION

One of the first passages in the Bible that describes the Lord God of the Hebrews as the creator of a "cornerstone" is found in the book of Job. The story of Job in the Old Testament is often used as a parallel to compare to the sufferings and adverse challenges of modern-day people of great faith in God. In the passage quoted above, the Lord is responding to Job, a man who the Bible says was "blameless and upright, who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1). Job had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and he also had a large number of servants. Early in his story, we read that Job suffered the devastating loss of his extensive herd of livestock and also suffered the tragic deaths of his all of his sons and daughters. And, as if this were not enough tragedy to experience all at once, Job was also afflicted with a disfiguring and painful skin disease that caused the physical wasting of his body. After word had spread about the troubles that Job had experienced, four friends came to Job to offer him sympathy, comfort, and, subsequently, unsolicited advice.

As for Job himself, he was at a loss to understand why God had allowed his suffering to occur. Job believed that he had been faithful to the Lord, and he knew that God was, and is, a “just” God. However, Job’s stated ponderings of “why has this happened to me?” clearly offer his doubts of God’s wisdom. In the scripture passage given above, the Lord gives a response to Job’s prior statements of his rationale over his situation. God, while giving answer to Job with firmness and divine authority, does not humiliate or condemn Job; the Lord also does not declare that Job is innocent of any sin. The Lord proclaims that he, alone, laid the cornerstone to the earth’s foundation, and that the Lord did so in the presence of the heavenly beings and the morning stars, who were rejoicing with song as they gave testimony to God’s sovereign power and wisdom. Job was not in attendance at this glorious moment of creation, and therefore, Job should not expect to be able to understand even the smallest of God’s plans for the world and for mankind. However, the Lord’s confrontation of Job’s naïve rationale for the suffering he had experienced was successful in bringing Job to complete faith in the overall goodness and wisdom of God. And for us, for those of us who suffer, we can trust that God, as the “cornerstone who set the foundation of the world,” is infinitely wise, and therefore, is infinitely fair and good.

Ask: Where do I see the wisdom and goodness of the Lord at work in my life 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”