

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday October 30, 2024

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Today is Wednesday, October 30 and as we keep our eyes on Christ the Cornerstone, we recall how God wants to move the world from places of brokenness to places of healing.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy and loving God, as I enter this time of prayer, I pause and become still. I calm my thoughts and silence my mind. I breathe deeply and slowly, and center myself upon Your steadfast love and gentle presence. Enlighten my heart and soul as I digest Your Word found in Holy Scripture. Teach me to listen for your voice above the surrounding chatter of the world. Help me understand what You are saying in my life. Reveal my places of brokenness and my need for healing in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.
Titus 3:3-7

REFLECTION

Today we read from a New Testament letter called Titus. Paul composed many letters to his churches and companions throughout Europe and Asia Minor. One of those letters was written to his close friend and colleague, Titus who organized and led churches in Crete. Crete is one of the largest Greek islands found in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea. Paul encouraged Titus to show the people of Crete how the good news of Jesus Christ can transform the surrounding culture. Paul's letter urged Titus to remind believers that while they live in a sinful culture, they can be transformed from the inside out by the power of God. Not only will they be changed, but, their transformation will inevitably change the culture around them.

Similar to the world in which Titus lived on the island of Crete, I recognize that I also live in a broken world. A culture surrounded by a whirlwind of secular thoughts, ideas and activities. Like the newly formed Cretan believers who existed in the minority, I also have been foolish, disobedient, deceived and even enslaved by all kinds of earthly passions and pleasures. As I observe the world through television and social media, I see evidence of violence, lies, enmity, envy and hatred. I confess I even see this in my own life and perhaps recognize this in the recesses of my own heart. I know the world has an influence on me. The negative diet of worldly concerns and priorities is the data that invades my soul. Sometimes it is easy to recognize where I am influenced, and other times it is more difficult to discern.

The entire Bible is a story of restoration. God deeply desires to restore me again and again and bring me to a place of healing, wholeness, and ultimately holiness. Paul's words to Titus balance a focus on sin and disobedience with a focus on mercy and grace. I consider which God wants me to be most aware of today - my sin and disobedience or His mercy and grace? Paul explains that God saves me through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. How does the image of washing speak to me? How am I being washed, reborn, refreshed and renewed? The image seems to imply water, but it is not specific. In my place of scarcity, something is being poured out on me abundantly and generously. God knows exactly what I need.

Ask: How are my thoughts, ideas, emotions and behaviors influenced more by the surrounding culture and less by God? Where are my places of scarcity and emptiness? What do I most long to receive from God? Can I imagine it poured out on me in abundance?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy Lord God, I confess the disobedience and transgressions of my heart and reject the negative influences of the world around me. Your holiness is in stark contrast to what I see in the surrounding culture. I invite you to appear again in my life revealing your kindness and love. Heal me not because of anything good I have done, but through your mercy. Save me through the washing of rebirth and renewal by Your Holy Spirit. Abundantly pour Your Spirit upon me so that I may become like Titus, your beloved child and heir to the life you offer. Restore and renew me in Your love. Amen.