

THE FIRST 15

Thursday, November 14, 2024

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As we endeavor to build our lives on Christ the Cornerstone, we see how God's grace moves us from self-concern to concern for others.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed and holy Lord God, I come to this quiet place to spend some time alone with You. I quiet my noisy thoughts and still my restless body. I breathe deeply and slowly, inhaling the promise of Your love and peace. Open my heart to receive a fresh experience of Your Holy Spirit. Open my ears to hear the message You have for me today. Open my mind to sympathize with the struggles and disappointments of others. Open my mouth to offer words of kindness and encouragement. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 1 Peter 3:8-12

REFLECTION

The apostle Peter tells us how to live together in community. His letter exhorts us to live together well. We are to treat one another a certain way - within our families and within the church. In Peter's "rule of life" there are five virtues we are to exhibit, they are often compared to five fingers of a hand working together in harmony.

According to Peter, first we are to be like-minded. We are to live in harmony with one another and be unified in our thinking. We are to exhibit a harmony of attitude and understanding. This like-mindedness flows from having the "mind of Christ." Philippians 2:5 says, In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Secondly, we are to be sympathetic. Hebrews 4:15 says Christ sympathizes with our weaknesses. Likewise we are to sympathize with others. We rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. When one member of the church body suffers we all suffer. Third, we are to love one another. This is the sort of brotherly and sisterly love exhibited in the true Christian community. God has loved us and we are to love one another from the heart. Fourth, we are to be compassionate. Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." The Holy Spirit moves us out of our selfishness to feel compassion and sympathy for others. Fifth, we are to be humble. We are called to humble service. We can look to Christ's example of humility as our model. Jesus entered into our human story as a

helpless infant born in a feeding trough. Jesus ate with tax-collectors and sinners. Jesus took the towel and basin and washed His disciples' feet. Jesus laid down His life and took the cross.

In his letter, Peter urges us to not retaliate. This is the Christian way of life. This is the Jesus way. Even when we are cursed, we bless. We are to love our enemies. We are to pray for those who persecute us. We love others, even those with whom we vehemently disagree. We hope they will come to know Christ because of our patience, love and kindness. I consider the people in my life who I most struggle to love. Those who rub me the wrong way. Those with whom I disagree. Those who cut me off in traffic, post opposing views on social media, take unfair advantage, or argue against my opinion. How might God want to move me to a greater place of love, forgiveness and acceptance?

Ask: How can I practice Peter's five virtues during the upcoming day and be more - like-minded, sympathetic, loving, compassionate and humble?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed Lord God, I am only able to grow in virtue and increase in goodness through the work of Your sanctifying grace. Reveal the places in my life where I most struggle to love others. Caution me when I want to repay evil for evil or insult with insult. Teach me what it means to respond with humility, patience and grace, maintaining the highest Christian integrity and fostering a spirit of peace. Only through Your grace can I grow in maturity and love others as You have first loved me. Amen.