
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

February 8, 2015

Flags on the Beach

*“But if you do warn the righteous not to sin, and they don’t sin,
they will be declared righteous.
Their lives will be preserved because they heeded the warning,
and you will save your life.”*

Ezekiel 3:21 (Common English Bible)

The sky is clear and the temperature is optimal for a day at the beach. You grab your sunscreen, a chair and a good book and look forward to a day in the sun, sand and surf. After making your way along the path that has been cleared through the sea grapes and other natural coastal fauna, you arrive on the beach and discover that flags have been prominently placed on or near lifeguard stations. Someone has been given the responsibility for flying the correct flag for each day’s swimming conditions. Though there may be some regional differences, the flag warning system is used by coastal communities worldwide to alert beach goers of potential water hazards.

On Delray Beach there are ordinarily four color flags. Green flags are the most welcomed. They are flown when the day is clear and the water is calm. A green flag is an all clear sign - safe to swim and enjoy the day. Yellow flags means that ocean conditions are not optimal but not life-threatening. There may be a high surf or dangerous current and caution is advised. A purple flag indicates that dangerous marine life is in the water or on the shore. This flag may be flown with other flags and suggests extreme caution. Red flags are the most serious. Usually, a red flag is used to discourage swimming by all but very strong swimmers.

Ezekiel is given “flag duty” by God for the people of Israel. He must shoulder the responsibility of placing warning flags in their midst alerting them of God’s presence and claim upon their lives. Whether the people paid attention to the flags or not was not Ezekiel’s concern, only that he got the word out. If the people were wise and heeded the warnings, they would live. Otherwise, they would perish. It is a considerable responsibility to discern the day’s conditions and carefully raise the appropriate flag.

As members of a faith community we have a similar responsibility. That responsibility is not necessarily to walk around announcing dire warnings. Rather, it is a responsibility to make a positive investment in the lives of others. As Ezekiel, God calls us to take an interest in the common welfare of others, to pour ourselves into their lives in such a manner that they see God and God’s care for them. By our genuine interest in others, we deliver ourselves from an inward focus that only results in selfishness, meanness and, ultimately fear of loss. It is how we will save our own lives.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, make me alert today of those around me that I may invest my time, gifts and energy into that they may know You and experience the riches of faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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