
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

March 1, 2015

"I am the Lord, and there is no other; beside me there is no God."
Isaiah 45:5 (Common English Bible)

Each morning I receive from the *New York Times* an electronic "briefing" of the day's top news stories. Conflict in the Ukraine, violent faith extremism in the Middle East and political tensions here at home seem to dominate the conversation of the citizens of this great nation. Any of these headline events could, at any moment, change the course of the lives of all of us. Few would question that, as a nation, we are unsettled. Yet, in the midst of all this, there remains a people who are prepared to stand and say, with conviction, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

Perhaps the present unease of our nation calls for a closer look at such a belief - a belief in a God who remains present and in control of all creation. Simply, what does the full weight of that profession of faith really mean? Though statistics show that a sizable majority of the U.S. population believe in God many somehow give the impression of taking much more seriously the temporary centers of power - political, economic, and scientific - than the active presence and work of an almighty God. We talk and behave as if there are other powers that are really in control of our future.

This is not new. The prophet Isaiah - as well as each of the Bible writers - knew well how much there is in our world that calls into question the active presence and care of a loving God. Yet, it is into such a world, where nations threaten one another, accidents happen and where hardship and difficulty fall upon both the just and the unjust, that these same writers bring to us a word from God. The day when Scripture was penned is not unlike our day; people were alarmed and fearful of what might happen to them.

Into such uncertainty one might ask if there is proof of God. There is not. Nor can the absence of God be proved. What remains is an examination of any anecdotal evidence that may be found. In my ministry I have listened to those with devastating illness, those who have lost a loved one and others who have experienced significant economic loss, who all speak of the common strength found in their trust of a living God. It was this faith that sustained them in difficulty. Perhaps all of this is anecdotal, as I have mentioned, but it is enough for me to join each of them in declaring the words of Isaiah, "I am the Lord, and there is no other; beside me there is no God."

Prayer: *When questions assail me, when I am perplexed by trouble all around me, sustain me, Oh, God, by the conviction that you are present in my life and that you hold my future in your grasp. Amen.*

Doug Hood