
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

April 24, 2016

Disillusionment with God

“The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground, fountains of water.”
Isaiah 35:7 (Common English Bible)

There is, perhaps, no greater disappointment in life than to experience disappointment with God. Missed opportunities, unrealized dreams and friends who fail us are no small matter. They can be debilitating at times. Yet, most people also recognize that such disappointments are the stuff of life. With a strong network of family and friends, many find that they are able to push through such disappointments. But what are we to do with our disappointment with God? This is the most shattering of disappointments. “No longer is there a wide, comfortable margin between peace and the edge of doom,” writes that great Scottish preacher, James S. Stewart.ⁱ Disillusionment with God is startling, surprising and overwhelming. In a deep spiritual sense, such disillusionment is taking-up residence in the desert.

Isaiah has a word for those desert moments – or days. In dramatic fashion, Isaiah speaks of a grand reversal, “The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground, fountains of water.” With incredible verve, he takes the most frightening and cynical judgment of the world that says that this life is nothing more than “burning sand” and reverses it. God is not absent nor will God remain silent. The word from the Lord is that the desert places of life will become an oasis; living water that quenches our fears and dispels the darkness.

What does this mean? In effect, Isaiah acknowledges his common experience with ours that life is full of disappointments, broken dreams and dashed hopes. More, Isaiah is no stranger to fears that come like a bolt of lightning, unnerving our sense of comfort and security. But he also wants to remind us of history; Israel’s history of a God that is never far off, a God that appears in the midst of struggle and uncertainty with the hand of a shepherd, confidently leading us forward into God’s future for us. In every situation, even when the darkness of the hour seems to have the upper hand, grace reigns.

Understand, of course, that the very struggle with disillusionment dispels any notion that faith is always experienced without struggle. Any spiritual journey occasionally moves through desert places, where the ground is hot and parched. But, Isaiah asks that we steadily move forward, particularly when our steps are labored and weak, for a wonderful discovery lies ahead of us, the same discovery that Isaiah made. Present circumstances that seem as burning sand will, by God’s promises, become a pool of cool water. Additionally, you will find yourself in the company of those who have discovered that they would rather travel the most difficult road with God than any other road without him.

Doug Hood

ⁱ James S. Stewart, “Beyond Disillusionment to Faith,” **The Wind of the Spirit** (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), 70.