

N U R T U R E
F A I T H
with
Dr. W. Douglas Hood, Jr.

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The Search for Serenity

READ: Psalm 23:4 (Common English Bible)

“Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no danger because you are with me. Your rod and your staff – they protect me.”

MEDITATE:

Few would disagree that our present age may be identified as one of insecurity. The recent presidential election in the United States has unmasked a starkly divided nation – the division largely one of how best to protect our way of life in a world that grows increasingly more hostile each day. Behind the rhetoric and rancor of the political right and left is an unrest that is driven by a disillusionment of our modern world. Present in France, Great Britain, Greece and multiple other nations is a spirit of revolt and revolution that is occurring right here in our own nation. Everywhere, it seems, is a feeling that we are no longer secure. We are vulnerable and, if we let down our guard, the world can get at us. People the world over have become weary of being tossed about by conflict, terror and uncertainty. Nations are looking for some haven where they can once again experience a new calm.

What is it that the Christian faith can provide in these troubling times? What impresses me in reading these few familiar words from Psalm 23 is the complete serenity of the one who walks through, “the darkest valley.” We are not told what is occurring in the Psalmist’s life when these words were written. Perhaps it was the death of a spouse or a child. Perhaps it is economic collapse or a diagnosis of a threatening illness. It does not matter that we aren’t told. It is enough to know that, whatever it may be, the experience is the darkest moment to be experienced in that particular life. Yet, the Psalmist is not disturbed or distracted by the news – the mood that prevails is one of tranquility. The clearly expressed reason is that God shows-up and the Psalmist notices. And that is enough.

There is present a calm temperament in a life that walks closely with the Lord. Though there are challenges and storms in our day that would unsettle many, the Psalmist is equipped with an amazing power of detachment. The shepherd’s “rod” and “staff” are visible in the midst of the darkness – both signs and symbols of the office of someone who comes alongside the sheep to tend off predators and provide gentle guidance in the right way. The Psalmist never lost sight of God and because of this, felt protected and cared for. Life is faced – even when it is darkest – bravely and with buoyancy.

That confidence can be ours as well. There is no more certain route to the recovery of serenity than through the discovery of God. The vulnerable life always clings to visible – and perishable – things of the earth, looking for guarantees. This is seen when someone announces that their hope for national security is in one candidate for president and not another. The invulnerable life rests secure in the invisible things, unruffled by the news of calamity because they have fixed their lives upon an unfaltering faith in an unfailing God. Rise each morning and repeat these words from the Psalmist. The power that is nurtured within will not change the external conditions of our world. But inner storms will subside as the presence of God is recognized.

