
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

June 1, 2014

Preparing for Unexpected Challenges

“Whenever they hand you over, don’t worry about how to speak or what you will say, because what you can say will be given to you at that moment.”

Matthew 10:19 (Common English Bible)

Jesus is here speaking to fishermen who live a quiet, inconspicuous life along the Sea of Galilee. They work hard and keep their heads low. Political tensions may swirl around them but they don’t engage. They prefer to remain out of any conversation that stirs discontent. Imagine, then, the panic that must have come when Jesus begins speaking to them about when they will be handed over to the authorities. In our day the best of us go limp and weak at the mere suggestion that we may be required to appear in court. Now, Jesus speaks to these humble, hard working men that they will appear before kings and governors to answer for their new found journey of faith. It will be no easy experience!

Mingled with awkwardness, the grip of fear stirs the inevitable question, “What shall we say in court?” Anxiety becomes worry. Worry becomes mental and spiritual disorder and eventual paralysis. The disciples now contemplate an emergency; what Jesus speaks of as inevitable. A crisis now looms on the horizon for men who had once hoped to remain invisible to the world. They must now prepare to speak on a very visible platform.

Our own life may be one that is moving along a level, regular road without any visible road hazards. Suddenly the character of the road changes and we are confronted with some great or unusual task. An unexpected illness presses for immediate lifestyle changes or financial circumstances become significantly more challenging. Anxiety moves into our homes. What shall we do?

The first step in all wise preparations for emergencies, suggests Jesus, is to cultivate the strength of stillness. “Don’t worry,” Jesus tells the disciples. Worry always signifies the absence of stillness, the calmness of spirit which is the very heart of strength. If we are to obtain the strength of stillness we must practice the art of noticing God in the present moment. Jesus promises the disciples that words will be given to them. What Jesus is reminding them is that God is present and aware of the challenge that has been placed before them. God will not leave them empty. As we increase our capacity for stillness so does our capacity to notice God’s presence increase. That is the best preparation for any of life’s unexpected surprises.

In the midst of my responsibilities today, O God, may I slow down long enough to notice You and Your certain care for me. In Jesus’ Name, I pray. Amen.

Doug Hood