
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

*“I live on high, in holiness, and also with the crushed and the lowly,
reviving the spirit of the lowly, reviving the heart of those who have been crushed.”*

Isaiah 57:15 (Common English Bible)

Recently Grace and I spent a weekend in the Florida Keys with two dear friends. In addition to sharing meals together, shopping, stimulating conversation about our families and an evening of bicycling, the four of us summoned the courage to try something we had never done before – paddle boarding. Popularity of the sport seems to be growing exponentially in South Florida, particularly the Keys. It looked fun and appeared to be a sport that would be easy for beginners. It was not. Paddle boarding challenges both core strength and balance and beginners spend more time falling from the board than standing. My wife, Grace, perhaps an exception; other people asking me how long she had been paddle boarding.

After several attempts at standing – and failing – Grace said to me to begin on my knees, “you have more control on your knees.” Hearing my wife’s words, my friend commented, “I hear a sermon in there somewhere!” Naturally, I was frustrated that I was unable to master paddle boarding immediately. But then, where would have been the satisfaction in that? Satisfaction of life is often preceded by considerable effort and discipline. So it is with our Christian faith. We must experience failure on our own before we can value God’s presence and strength that enables us to stand. The pinnacle of joy and satisfaction in our faith is our communion with the Risen Christ. That communion begins on our knees in prayer – our demonstration that we can’t do life apart from God.

To be a Christian is to follow Jesus. And his own life was no leap from the cradle in Bethlehem to the victory of Easter morning. Victory implies something was defeated. Between birth and resurrection, Jesus lived deeply. It was a life that knew suffering, betrayal and abandonment. We experience with Jesus the victory and joy of the Resurrection because we know all too well his hell of loneliness and pain. It was a hell that Jesus defeated because he spent so much of his life on his knees. Grace is absolutely right, “You have more control on your knees.”

The central question that confronts many today is where is God in the darkness of the present world – the darkness that seems to defeat a hope for tomorrow? Isaiah declares that our God lives with the crushed and the lowly. God is not only present in our darkness; God is at work, “reviving the spirit of the lowly, reviving the heart of those who have been crushed.” God did so for Jesus. God will do so for us. What is needed is that we wait for God’s victory on our knees.

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