
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

July 17, 2016

Overwhelmed?

“God’s word continued to grow and increase.”
Acts 12:24 (Common English Bible)

On the streets, in our neighborhoods and our places of work the prevailing mood of the day is, “overwhelmed”. The world today seems to be more complex, more massive, and more unmanageable than our individual and corporate memory can recall. The magnitude of the problems we face as a nation – particularly threats to our national security – leave us bewildered and frightened. It seems that we are up against a new level of massiveness and everything now appears to be beyond the power of ordinary people and governments to solve or control. Confronted with the overwhelming complexities of life today, the question presses against our hearts and spirits, is there hope?

This one sentence from the Book of Acts does not suggest a solution to the enormity of the difficulties we face. It does suggest the mood created by them. As the church, as followers of Jesus Christ, we have a responsibility to our families, our colleagues and the communities in which we live to shift the focus from the staggering weight of our nation’s ills to a mood of optimism. It is not “wishful thinking” that is suggested by this one verse in Acts. Rather, it is the evidence that, in a world of mounting difficulties, God remains active and in control. What is most urgently needed today is for the church to be the church, to change the present mood of being overwhelmed to one of conviction that God has come into the world and that God’s word continues to grow and increase.

The world in which these words were written was not unlike our own. The church of Jesus Christ was under a most severe persecution and its continued existence seemed doubtful. King Herod is on a rampage to stamp-out the church by destroying its leaders. Peter and John are placed in prison. James, the brother of John, is killed, and the church is under constant attack and is being scattered everywhere. But, God’s word continued to grow and increase. This truth, the unfaltering movement of God’s word, is a tonic for the timid and an encouragement for each one of us who feel overwhelmed.

As the church, as members of the body of Christ, we have a moral and faithful obligation to reevaluate our mood. Since the world tends to magnify the negative, a Christian mood of hope is vital. When some ask, “What is this world coming to?” the church must answer, “Christ has come into the world.” It is that response that changes the prevailing mood. It may not be within our power to control the conditions of life, but we do have a choice for our attitude toward them. What is now needed is a new approach. The church’s high calling is to strengthen people by our unwavering confidence that, in the midst of unsettling news, God is not absent.

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