
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

August 17, 2014

Confidence in Christ

“Why are you frightened? Don’t you have faith yet?”
Mark 4:40 (Common English Bible)

It is not comfortable to hear the voice of Jesus ask, “Why are you frightened?” Fear belongs to children and the weak. Where fear may be present in our adult lives we conceal it. We are expected to be strong and unflappable; never an easy target for the enemy, whoever or whatever the enemy may be. Yet, here Jesus tears away our pretense, looks directly into our souls and asks, “Why are you frightened?” Nothing – including our fear – is hidden from the Lord.

Is there anyone in the church today who has not known the fear that clutches when divisions arise? The Presbyterian Church USA was once a large force for God in our nation; a proud presence in the local community. By many measures that same church appears reduced to a flickering candle in the high wind of discord within and indifference without. Secretly we agree at times that the effort in which we are presently engaged is a losing battle. How strong, I want to ask in all frankness, how strong really is our faith in God, our confidence in Christ? Jesus presses us, “Don’t you have faith yet?”

The spiritual power our churches need today, the spiritual renewal so many of us are seeking is not a diversion from the present strife in the church but right in the midst of it. The faith that develops cloistered from the traffic of our present struggles is not Christian faith. Denial never has produced the strength and vitality that our church hungers for. There cannot be hung an iron curtain between the vigor of council meetings and the formation of individuals into the likeness of Christ. The living faith Jesus calls for, the faith which impels us to meet the present challenges, is shaped in the crux of the challenges, not from escaping them.

The church requires new words and new images to express what confidence in Christ can do for a troubled, conflicted church. Where the body of the church has grown tired and vitality is remembered only in former days, the Gospel hovers around like a ghost whispering, “God still promises life and life abundant.” What is required is a crack in the prevailing despair, an opening of hope that once again believes in uncommon possibilities orchestrated by the Holy Spirit. The church needs inward eyes that catches the vision of God’s present activity and an inward spirit that responds to the tug of the unseen force of the Spirit and the readiness to let go of the tired religion that may be standing in the way of Christ making all things new.

Father, forgive. Forgive the weariness that fails to believe in new possibilities. Forgive the doubt that hinders faithful obedience. Forgive despair that no longer anticipates Your reconciling work. Amen.

Doug Hood