
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

August 31, 2014

Contemplating Heaven

“Then, we who are living and still around will be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet with the Lord in the air. That way we will always be with the Lord.”

I Thessalonians 4:17 (Common English Bible)

Many in the church today occupy their minds and energy with the condition of those who have meager resources. In our community – as in most communities – are the hungry, the addicted and homeless. The common streets of the community which are a blessing to some are unkind to others. Particularly in communities where abundance is easily visible, scarcity is deeply experienced by some. Into this condition of impoverishment are good people who seek to concentrate all their energy in bettering the life that is. The church is at its best because of these people; the Kingdom of God draws a little nearer to earth for their labor of love.

Yet, for all their empathy for the poor, the ceaseless effort to lift the burden for those who suffer there is a larger lesson that is occasionally missed – the value of dwelling upon that place in which we will spend eternity with our Lord. Glimpses of the life to come, stirring the imagination with thoughts of continual communion with our Lord has the capacity to nourish the effort in realizing here on earth that the life that is to be in heaven. And I have discovered that no one works more eagerly than those who, for now and again, permit their thoughts to view the New Jerusalem, the City of God as spoken of in the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation.

In these few sentences from I Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul is directing our gaze to something he has seen. Paul’s faith is one that has received its nourishment from the steady attention to God and God’s present activity in the world. Our own eyes can never hope to see what Paul sees without the same attention to God. As with any relationship, spiritual growth demands intentionally spending time with the one we hope to spend eternity. Naturally, that requires the regular reading and contemplation of God’s Word in the Bible.

It is good to occasionally think about the place to which we are all moving toward. Such a steady, frequent and regular contemplation of life with God gives fresh energy for the practical life of faith. The door between our heart and the exercise of faithful obedience to our Lord is opened. Truth understood in the heart is transformed to a power that gives life to others. Passions awaken and steadily nourished begin to determine our activity in the church and community. In a very real sense, we embody the continuing work of Jesus in the present day.

Silence the daily distractions, O Lord, which keeps me from pursuing a deeper relationship with You. Instill within me the desire to know You more fully and to participate more completely in Your reconciling work in the world. Amen.

Doug Hood