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## Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

September 14, 2014

When Faith Is Difficult

*"We can't find goodness anywhere."*  
Psalm 4:6 (Common English Bible)

If there remains anyone who argues that the Bible isn't relevant for today they have demonstrated that they haven't paid attention to the Bible – not close attention anyway. Is there anything more timeless than the agonizing cry, "We can't find goodness anywhere?" Each morning our minds are disturbed by the growing threat of the militant Islamic group, ISIS, the conflict between Israel and Palestine and the racial unrest in Ferguson, Missouri. Beneath these attention getting headlines is the less mentioned but continuing concern of the growing wealth gap in our country and the millions in our nation who struggle daily to simply have enough. There are no snappy answers to the painful question of human struggle.

It is well that the Bible does not offer a quick and pre-fabricated answer to this despairing cry. And it is best for us to refrain from such a temptation. First, we are not free to indulge in any cynical or dismissal attitudes such as, "Well, that's life," or, "Bad things just happen." As followers of Jesus we are baptized into the common confession that our lives are in the hands of God, and that this God is a God of love. Second, we don't occupy some place between God and the struggle of humanity. Not one of us has some special insight into the mysterious work of God in the midst of our common difficulty. Each of us must sweat it out with everyone else.

What remains is a prayer: "Lord, show us once more the light of your face." This is the prayer of the Psalmist and nothing new can be added. The prayer is the same today as it was yesterday, fresh and urgent. It is as new as the earthquake that shook the San Francisco Bay Area a few days ago and the agony that kept someone awake last night. It is new when we utter it personally, today. No devotional, not one inspirational book can answer the plea, the emotional depth of that prayer.

On our knees we pray. If we listen in the silences between our words the Holy Spirit reminds us that God was never absent in the horrors of human life in the Bible – nor will God be absent today. On the Via Dolorosa – the way of the cross – in Jerusalem, God was very present in the heart of human misery giving, giving and giving Himself, so that after this there would be no fear, no despair and no doubt of God's love. The cry, "We can't find goodness anywhere," still sounds in the streets of our communities. We live with it and we hear it echo in our souls. But the Spirit helps us recall the suffering of Christ – a suffering accepted out of Christ's love for us. It is a love that will work for the good of all those who love Him.

Prayer: *In moments when my heart grows weary, help me remember the Via Dolorosa, the way of the cross. In the certain Name of Jesus, I pray, Amen.*

Doug Hood

*Reprinted from Dr. Hood's September 5, 2014 blog posting.*