



God Our Refuge

Psalm 62:5-12

*Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.*

January 25, 2015

Thought For The Week

Scriptures

Samuel 3: 3b-10, 19 • Corinthians 6: 13c-15a, 17-20 • John 1:35-42

In my lifetime I have had access to many good books and good spiritual writers. The spiritual writers that I find most difficult to understand are those who claim to have some sort of direct vision or connection to God. It's often inspiring, to read about their visions, but on the whole I am left a little wanting. Those visions have never happened to me. Maybe I didn't study the scriptures enough when I was younger or maybe I've simply been distracted by the world around me, leaving the voice of God to the more spiritual people.

On the other hand for many years in my life I have been attracted to those spiritual writers who can say that they have met God in the world around them, in ordinary human circumstances. They don't claim voices or visions, but they insist that God is truly real to them; they insist that there is a certain call or invitation to dialogue. For these writers, God does not call out of the heavens but from some striking circumstance in daily life.

I will also admit, however, that I have heard what I truly feel was the voice of God spoken by other ministers, albeit, most often in my younger years. I will go further and say that some of my best ideas for sermons have come to me in the middle of my thoughts of those long ago experiences. In some instances, of course, I must admit that I cannot always remember what the experience and the surrounding circumstances were. That's human nature, I suppose.

Nonetheless, I will insist from my own experience that God does speak in a very personal manner, a way that each of us understands and personally interprets.

We have two such a human experiences described for us in the above captioned scriptures. The first incident comes out of the Old Testament Book of Samuel. It tells the story of the young Samuel who hears "voices." Finally, assuming that it must be God, he decides to simply say, "speak Lord, your servant is listening." That was the beginning of his vocation of a leader in Israel.

It occurs to me that some of the voices we hear in our daily life, perhaps even in dreams, are often the voice of God. To interpret them we just have to say, "Lord, would you please make that a little clearer." Sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't.

The second incident comes out of the gospel of John. It is the story of how Peter first met Jesus and in the process of the meeting was given the new name of Cephas. Of course, we all know the rest of Peter's story; he became the Rock on which the Church was built. These were two simple human incidents that turn out to be spiritual experiences.

My sense is that such incidents happen often in our lives. Well, there may not always be voices, of course but rather something like a hunch, a premonition, an intuition that turns out to be important when we have said: "Speak, Lord, I'm listening."

I have tried this myself and I can tell you that it works almost every time. Sometimes I even sit down at the computer and start looking for ideas to write a sermon. Other times, I call a friend that I haven't spoken to in quite a while and, hopefully, share my ministry that way.

How you respond to God's call is a personal experience. You simply have to keep listening and have the courage to act.

Each time you witness a kindly act by another person, thank the Lord that they were listening too.

Happy Birthday Wayne (1/28)

Stewardship Thought for the Week

In an airplane the authority is somewhat divided between the captain, the first officer, and the flight dispatcher at the landing field. And the second officer can relieve and take the place of the first officer when necessary. But in the flight of the soul through time there is only one person in authority—and that is thyself.

One sign, which a traveler can read frequently on a cross-country automobile trip, is this— "Travel at your own risk." Sometimes it is introduced by another statement—"Road under construction," or "Bridge condemned." And by posting these signs the county or state representatives not only warn the traveler to be cautious and careful but also absolve the county or state of responsibility in case of accident on that part of the road so designated. If the traveler comes to harm on the road, he can bring no suit for damages. He was traveling at his own risk.

"Travel at your own risk." In the long journey of life, which we are all taking, every person travels at their own risk. You are the responsible party. Your friends, your neighbor, your parents, the community in which you live, your schools, your teachers, your relatives are not the responsible ones, but you yourself. You do the traveling, and you incur the risks, whatever they are. A proverb expresses this truth in familiar language: "Every man has his own life to live."

Daniel Webster, when asked what was the greatest thought that had passed through his mind, answered "My accountability to God." Life is a great journey, with wonderful goals, which flash through cloud, fog and mist their glorious invitations. But we must travel carefully and live as accountable to God in the high, solemn and scriptural sense,

I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.