

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 3/11/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, March 12 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, ask GOD's provision in your life. Pray that GOD gives you the wisdom and the words to overcome any hesitation you feel toward doing GOD's will. Ask the Spirit to fill you up with trust in GOD's presence and guidance as you seek to be GOD's hands and voice in the world.*

How do you read the Bible? I mean, when you're reading it, what do you think the Bible contains? For most of us, there are probably two things that we think we are reading. First, it is a historical record (mostly) of things that happened long ago. We believe that we are reading about a different time and place. On one level, that's true, but it also means that we don't see a direct connection from the historical record of back then to our lives today. Second, we also read it as a collection of teachings, specifically about how GOD wants us to live. The Bible contains guidelines for how we should approach life. Even here many tend to apply these teachings to "back then" and not nearly so much to life now.

Consider, though, that the Bible is past applied to the present. Imagine that what is recorded from way back then also applies to today. It's not just history; it's a present claim on our lives now. So, when JESUS says to the fishermen, "Come, follow ME," it's not just what happened two thousand years ago. It is what JESUS is saying to us. "Come, follow ME, now." When JESUS after the resurrection tells Peter, "Feed MY sheep," HE's not just telling Peter to oversee HIS followers back then. HE's telling us to look out for one another today.

In JESUS' day, the disciples left home and family to go and learn from JESUS. They heard HIS words and saw HIS actions as the example that they were to follow. This was discipleship for them as they accepted HIS call to follow. Today, we tend to think of discipleship as going to church, reading or hearing about JESUS' life back then, and helping with social ministries today. How different would our lives be today if we viewed our discipleship in the same way the disciples did back then? What would you give up to follow JESUS? Better still, what will you give up to follow JESUS? Certainly, the living situations of back then and today are different. For the first disciples to leave home, family, and employment was looked upon differently in that time. The financial implications were different then. Nevertheless, the call to set other things aside to dedicate one's life to JESUS is as real today as it was then.

The Bible is not just a kind of "back then" collection of stories. It is a unique gift from GOD that invites us to reform the way we think about our lives now. It invites us to reshape our lives, often in ways that contrast the world in which we live. It calls us to rethink what it means to live as a disciple in this time and place. When you hear or read the words of JESUS, take time to ask yourself, "What does this mean for me today? What would it look like for me to take the action that JESUS calls for? How can I apply this to my life now?" The call of JESUS transcends history and reaches every moment in time. The original disciples are long gone from this world, but the lessons of JESUS continue. This would not have happened if there weren't people who heard the invitation of JESUS to follow seriously and personally. We, too, have that opportunity to make that kind of discipleship a real part of our lives here and now.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey