



Leaning into the Heart of the Holy

2016 Lenten Devotions

Wednesday

February 17, 2016

Lean on Me

By Jim Henderson

When gray morning light pushes away the night and the smell of strong coffee fills our kitchen, my thoughts flow mixed and unstructured as I come fully awake to enjoy the morning of a new day in Rocky Mount, NC. *"This is the day the Lord has made. Be happy and something, something, something"*. I don't remember it exactly, but I like the sentiment, a nice prayer to start the day.

Mornings have always been special to me, a quiet time when the world makes sense. I recall mornings as a young boy looking out my bedroom window at the flat horizon of a West Texas cotton field just as morning's first streak of sunlight hit the sky. I remember another morning in a German forest with the eerie, surreal quietness of heavy snow on fallen leaves as I collected my sleeping bag and gear. In Vietnam, I remember the fungal, moist smell of early morning fog on a jungle hill just east of Da Nang.

Perhaps the most peaceful mornings I've experienced were driving along a narrow, asphalt road in Arlington National Cemetery, in Virginia on my way to work. This would have been 1987, and I was still in military service assigned to the Pentagon. As I drove slowly, I could see soldiers, mostly young guys in combat fatigue uniform, sitting, standing, sleeping, laughing, squaring off with each other among the grave markers. I recognized some of them. Some were believers and others were not. Some were Christian, some Jewish, some were Muslim, some were nothing in particular but in the final, desperate moments of their lives, they all leaned on Jesus, praying for courage and deliverance. Arlington National Cemetery is a place where you can learn a lot about life.

On a bright January morning in 2012, Laura and I walked solemnly with friends and family to a consecrated piece of ground at Arlington National Cemetery to close one of the chapters of our lives. During that difficult time, the presence of Christ Jesus was our strength, courage and deliverance and his message was real..... *"Lean on me when you're not strong....."*

During this season of Lent 2016, may we lean in to the Father and listen to what he is saying.

Prayer:

Startle us, O God, with your truth and open our hearts and our minds to your wondrous love. Speak your word to us; silence in us any voice but your own and be with us now as we turn our attention, our minds and our hearts, to you, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. —Rev. John Buchanan, Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago IL

Psalm 27

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.
Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

One thing I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple.

For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.

Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!
“Come,” my heart says, “seek his face!”
Your face, Lord, do I seek.
Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation!
If my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will take me up.

Teach me your way, O Lord,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.
Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!