

***PRAISE INTERNATIONAL***  
***MORE THAN SAFE - SATISFIED***  
***JOHN 15:11-17***

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**Good Morning**

Prayer Needs

Beginning September 7, 1940 through the 11th of May 1941 England was subjected to an aerial bomb campaign from Germany that was intended to bring the island nation to its knees. The city of London suffered the worst under the Aerial blitz with night after night having bombs dropped on the city. Hitlers expectation was that such an assault would terrorize the nation into submission and surrender. The outcome was actually quit the opposite! Yes there were almost countless loss's of property, business's and lives but what Hitler had not imagined was a nation that not only endured but whose economy actually progressed. The secret was something no one could have planned in advance. The English did in fact anticipate a bombing campaign based on what they saw Hitler do in other parts of Europe so in London for instance air raid shelters were located in underground spaces that already existed like the London underground railway and in the south of London in Chiselhurst in man made limestone caves that had been formed by the removal of needed limestone. By the time the air raids began in Chiselhurst nearly 22 miles of caves existed. During the Blitz nearly 15,000 men women boys and girls found shelter in Chiselhurst. Denise and I have actually visited those caves - its a bit chilling to consider that night after night men and women would pay a penny to enter the caves - daily walking away from their home, job and life as they have known into a cave with thousands of others - knowing they had absolutely no assurance that their home, business and way of life would be there the next morning - you see that is what the German machine was counting on - that sense of loss would lead to a disconnected demoralized people who had nothing more than to surrender.

Yet here is what happened in real time - in the Caves and other shelters - it is as if the English people found one another again. They formed a whole way of life in the Caves - they ate together - worshiped together and learned to care for one another. After the Air raids began the government set up centers throughout the City to give psychological support and help - they ended up closing most of them altogether because no one came...something else had happened in the Caves. In the Caves and Shelters they connected and found something deeper. It is as if they emerged with a clearer sense of what their life was about - not the things they may or may have lost but in the life they were living together. It was in the Caves and Shelters they gave themselves to one another and found a Story bigger than their own. Much has been written about this specific time - what remains striking is that in a time real darkness and uncertain outcomes the safest place was not the place in guarding their stuff but in the place of giving themselves to others. Now this was not a utopia - there were indeed problems but the point I am making is that something was discovered in the place of life as they gave themselves to one another!

In our text today John 15:11-17 we are reading what some have called Jesus last will and testament. The words Jesus is sharing with His friends just hours before His betrayal, torture and death. Think about this - Jesus can see the world and creation organizing itself against its Creator...and He seemingly is not worried about trying to 'protect and preserve Himself'.

- In fact this entire dialogue in John begins in John 13:3 *'Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from the supper; and laid aside His garments and taking a towel.....'*
- does what no one else wants to do...**then He says I have left you an example...**

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***And the secret is simply this Christ in you!***  
***Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.***  
***Col 1:27b JB Phillips***

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The path to life joy and success in this Kingdom is NOT like anything you are familiar with - John 15.

- Here is how my joy will be settled in you - **in Love.**

**To be clear - this is not love - meaning I have like you a lot.**

- **Jesus demonstrates this love by giving Himself fully on a cross!**

**Beloved the Good News we proclaim today is that the Safest place on earth when darkness surrounds and outcomes are uncertain - the place that consistently produces life and joy is not the place of protection from external and internal harm but in the place of self giving love!**

**“This is my commandment that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends....This I command that you love one another”**

**Oh the simplicity of Jesus invitation!**

We have a daily diet of another message - the path to real life and joy is found when the external resources of my life are un-hindered. When we can assure ourselves that we are secure that we belong and have made a difference in others lives....and we see those things outside of ourselves. If we just had the right political policies in place we could all be cared for and protected. And the very things that drive these debates are centered in the fear of what will loose. Our rights, our security, our belongings our resources.

This past Thursday was the first Thursday of May and is the day that historically been called the National Day of Prayer. A day that I have given hearty support to the idea of praying for our nation and the leaders of our nation. Increasingly however I have found myself in conflict with the idea that the target of our praying is primarily about our own sense of security comfort and welfare.

Jesus its coming apart at the seems - fix it so I can feel comfortable.

Yet here is Jesus its all coming apart...and He is given to Love - specifically love that lays down His life!

So I was praying this past Thursday morning - and these verses came to mind out of Psalm 48:12 where the Psalmist said look at Jerusalem, walk around its towers....then comes verse 12 **...for such is God...**

- What?
- A City is a picture of God? Msg – the Story of God...who guides us to the end of time.
- Now some of us may say - yea I have my favorite City that makes me smile - makes sense.
- Well lets explore this a bit - what is the Psalmist saying?
- He is saying - God is telling a story - through human lives in the **context of community!**
- Not about the opulence of a their homes but lives displaying - image bearers displaying **something of Heaven on earth – which is their actual design.**
- As it is in Heaven - so the community of the God head is a place of shared life - in Joy and peace? Yes!

**So lets not miss this when God takes on a human body to put Heaven on display - He clearly reveals that the Safest place and that will become a source of Joy and life is not in better human policies but in self giving love!**

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So here is what I want us to hear today....the path to As it is Heaven....will be on the Earth...

- Not better policy or fixing poor programming....
- Through giving ourselves in love!

So lets just put this is today's headlines...

- We are seeing real injustice towards the oppressed....
- We are seeing a real time uncertainty in a changing environment
- We are seeing a real health crisis unfold around the globe.....

*American Quaker and spiritual writer Richard Foster has said, "We have real difficulty here because everyone thinks of changing the world, but where, oh where, are those who think of changing themselves? People may genuinely want to be good, but seldom are they prepared to do what it takes to produce the inward life of goodness that can form the soul. Personal formation into the likeness of Christ is arduous and lifelong."*

As I read and reread the words of Jesus I cannot help but conclude that all too often I have believed and lived as if the greatest place of change that needed to happen **was out there...**

- And hence I participated and led prayer gatherings from the court house to literally the steps of the Supreme Court.
- Beloved as I continue to surrender to the words of Jesus I find myself surrendering that the greatest **place of change is here in me.**
- Jesus facing the rebellion of the ages - never once mentioned Caesar, Herod or Rome – dare I say 'Deep State'...is not His concern... **but He does invite His friends to Love one another.**

That in living in surrendered love to one another...God can tell a story of Connection, Community, abundance, beauty and 'co-creating' that **looks like Heaven on Earth.**

- That defies logic and reveals beauty, Joy and life – and this beloved is the Kingdom!

**So what does this Mean – Maybe our life is not just about our best ideas of Safety**

**1. Perhaps I need to rethink the idea of Safety....**

- Time - Talent - Treasure – etf, nft, gold, bit coin....
- Joy nothing to do with those...is directly connected to living connected to Love...
- Self giving love that lays down its life - seems like Jesus said that right?  
*'one thing you lack....sell your stuff and give to the poor...'*
- 'Who for the Joy set before Him...endured the cross...! Jesus very life and ministry was anchored in Joy that was fleshed out in love!
  - Jn 15:9-10 The Msg. *"I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love.*
- Last week we looked at the idea of Abiding - Remaining ( take up permanent residence )
- Looked at the idea of surrendering our grief, our fear, our anxiety, disappointments to Jesus...to trust that He actually taking this collective grief into Himself.

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John 15:6 - **Remain - take up permanent residence in love....**

- What if part of surrender is - is surrender what I am convinced I have to protect?
- What if part of surrender is owning the fact that fear often motivates my actions?
- Fear is is that opposite of Love beloved.
- What if remaining in love is giving what I am protecting for others....?

**2. More than Safe....surrendered to a new way of inhabiting life – Love.**

- 11-15 The Msg. *“I’ve told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I’m no longer calling you servants because servants don’t understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I’ve named you friends because I’ve let you in on everything I’ve heard from the Father.*
- Now this one can be challenging....
- Walk around the City – look at the Story God is telling...
- **NOT the story of accomplishment and success....**
- What if the greatest thing that God gets out of our life is the story He is telling of His love?

**Can I just talk bluntly - God in the flesh....**

- His greatest success was not the feeding of thousands...they actually turned away (look at John 6)
- He did not organize one rally or start any organization.
- His closest companions....well they all left and one straight up betrayed Him.

**The greatest display of the Story of Gods grace is Love on a Cross!**

- I wonder if we might benefit from taking another walk around the City – deeply think about the Story - and noticing the Grace of God in our life?

**3. The Path to life and Joy - is not safety from fear - as defined by the world but Love in the context of community not isolation!**

- This is where we need to hear the words in red -dare I say we all can agree when it comes naturally...but what about when I am circling the wagons and reading for safety?
  - To trust love is to choose others over me...when it costs me in the moment – when it does not necessarily feel safe.
  - To trust love will produce life and joy even in the face of sacrifice (fatigued parent to a child)

***John 15:11 'These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.'***

As it is so well said in one prayer

“Forgive us when we imagine that you are done with your re-creative work in us. Amen”

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**Closing Prayer that will lead us to Communion  
(From Centering Prayers by Peter Traben Haas - April 26)**

**You are the Miracle**

Lord Jesus, Eternal Christ:  
I make my claim on reality requesting -  
forgiveness of every debt,  
provision for every need,  
strength for every weakness,  
comfort for every trouble,  
healing for every sickness,  
peace for every anxiety,  
joy for every sorrow,  
light for every darkness,  
love for every longing,  
companionship for every loneliness,  
presence for every absence,  
meaning for every emptiness,  
bread for every hunger,  
water for every thirst,  
shelter for every storm,  
and abundance for every lack.  
You are the miracle.

You part the waters again and again,  
inviting humankind to ask, seek and knock.

I await your whisper in the silence and envision your  
Word bringing everything to life.

Amen.

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