

Greetings to all those who are on the path to become real,

SCRIPTURE:

1 Chronicles 16:11

(CEB) – Larger reading: 1 Chronicles 16:7-36
seek his face always!”

“Pursue the Lord and his strength;

STORY:

Someone has said: “When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost!”

REFLECTION:

During a more peaceful era in the Middle East the preeminent preacher of New York City’s great Riverside Church, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, toured the Holy Land.

He was invited to address the student body at American University, Beirut, Lebanon which had a diverse student body, made up of citizens of numerous countries and at least sixteen different religions.

The problem confronting The Rev. Fosdick was what could one individual share that would be both significant and relevant to such a diverse and varied group of individuals.

Dr. Fosdick began with: *“I do not ask anyone here to change his religion, but I do ask all of you to face up to this question: What is your religion doing to your character?”* He was summoning his listeners to allow their faith to make a lasting impact on their life. On another occasion he also stated: *“What you are speaks so loudly I cannot hear a word you say.”* Wise words indeed!

It is this old preacher’s opinion is that all too often our faith and our life seems disjointed and at odds with each other ... as if what we state on Sunday has little effect on Monday – a dualism which is in a constant tug-of-war for our spirit’s allegiance. May I suggest that the answer might simply lie in what we are looking for. Consider the life of two birds: Over our nation’s deserts two birds fly. One is the hummingbird ... the other the vulture. One feeds on the sweet nectar of the colorful and beautiful flowers of the desert ... the other feeds on the rotting and decaying flesh of dead animals. Both birds are very much alive. Both birds thrive within the same environment. Both birds co-exist with each other ... but, both birds live a very different life.

I would like to suggest that the hummingbird lives on what is ... the vulture lives on what has been. One bird looks for what is alive ... the other looks for what is dead. Each bird finds what it is looking for. We all do ... be it dead and gone ... or fresh and alive. It is the same for the reality of faith within the context of our life.

Now, I will not venture to suggest that some of us are hummingbirds while others of us our vultures ... but, our approach to life can be much the same. Thus, Dr. Harry’s question: *What is your religion doing to your character?* Does it make a difference? We are deep into the Christmas season. There are only 9 more days left in the lead up to the big celebration. Most of us will be out (or online) shopping during this period. Along with that delightful experience, we will also be sending out those last minute Christmas cards to people that we had overlooked. We will be gathering the “fixins” for the festival meal to be shared on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day with our

family and maybe, a couple of friends (just do it safely – remember that Covid doesn't play favorites). We will double check to make sure that we have enough gift-wrapping paper and gift tags before the last store closes. Packages that haven't been sent will be rushed over to an overnight freight company so they can arrive before Christmas while our fingers are crossed that they will arrive on time.

And, while we are doing all of that, the news media reminds us daily of the deep needs that individuals are having in these difficult times. They will show pictures of food kitchens, overnight cold weather shelters, the homeless and the needy. We stand at the threshold of being able to help others or only to do for our families and ourselves.

When we look around we just might be reminded just how blessed we really are ... how fortunate life has treated us ... how "rich" our lives truly are ... all of it stands as an example of the nectar of life that we have been privileged to drink in.

Just how alive we are to the people all around us and their various needs depends on our hummingbird or vulture status. We have a choice ... we can either take from life or we can give life to others. One path leads to meaningless existence ... the other? ... well, have you ever seen a hummingbird in flight? I think that I'm going to try for the hummingbird status.

It is about character. It is about giving yourself away. It is about shaping our future and reshaping the present reality of others who are in desperate need this holiday season. It is about a baby born in a stable in a world filled with vultures. It is about the opportunities to become hummingbirds that he only provides. It is about life and becoming very much alive than we have ever realized before! It is about the character of faith.

QUOTE:

"Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure; where your treasure is, there is your heart; where your heart is, there is your happiness." ~ St. Augustine

PRAYER:

I need your help, Lord, to become all that you have created me to be. I just realized that this life is not a Do It Yourself project. If I'm on my own I'm going to mess up. So come quickly and rescue me from myself.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim

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