

Bloom Where You Are Planted

As I walked beside my dad to heaven's door in recent weeks, I found myself facing my own mortality. Though he was 26 years ahead of me when he entered glory, that difference in years began to seem really short. Will I have 26 more years? The Word says we can have a long life. Will they be years of health and purposeful living? Because of God's promises, that is what I am expecting.

That being true, 26 more years still seem short. As I added up what I could see of the result of the last 26 years, the length of our full-time ministry so far, the fruit seemed inadequate. Yes, I know I shouldn't do that, but I did. It especially seemed that way as I compared my life with others in ministry. Yes, I shouldn't do that either, but I did. I saw that many have had great fruitfulness. I was not so sure about me. After several weeks of this dangerous "navel gazing" (that's what Jackie would call it) I began to wonder if I had really missed it with God over the years. You probably already know where that brought me. To the place of discouragement. "Oh if only....., I should have, I should have not...., I ought to be...., Blah, Blah."

I finally came to a simple place with God. I said, "Lord, I just want to be in Your will; I want to be obedient." And He said one little thing to me: "Bloom where you are planted."

It was not hard to figure out where God has planted me: it was in my home, my church, my family, my city, and in the ministry he had given me. The "blooming part"? It reminded me of Joseph keeping his heart right and prospering abundantly in circumstances he didn't like, of David serving God faithfully when being chased by Saul, or Daniel keeping on praying when Nebuchadnezzar said to stop it or die! These men just kept on displaying the character of God and being obedient to Him right where they were, regardless of where they were. They "bloomed where they were planted."

Thinking about this, a line in a Sunday School song from my childhood came up to my mind: "Brighten the corner where you are....!" I knew it was a reminder to stop wishing I was someone or someplace else, or regretting my imperfect past, or trying to judge the fruit of my life. I was called back to trusting God and allowing His joy and love to flow through me to others -- right now.

My life is now. God's will is now, where I am, who I am with, in the place where I have been "planted" by the design of God. I was wasting time examining myself, which only brought discouragement. Well, HELLO!! That's why the Word calls us to "fix our eyes on Jesus..."!

So I decided (again) to take life as it is, not as I wish it would have been -- accepting myself as God has made me, not wishing I were somebody else. I decided to believe (again) that He can make something beautiful out of my life, even if the beauty comes from ashes!

This choice takes mostly some humility -- and only a little bit of faith. Psalms 131 reads,

" My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty (lofty); I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful (difficult, profound) for me.

But I have stilled (calmed) and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.

Most of the discomfort of our soul comes from trying to figure things out that we can't figure out, and trying to understand things that are beyond our understanding. This comes from pride in our soul. A little humility of mind will let God handle the big stuff and the confusing stuff. Then we can calm down and lean on Him. Once there, it is only a short distance to renewed faith and joy. Leaning on Him, we are ready again to "bloom where we are planted".

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