

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Thursday, November 19, 2020

An In-Active Living Community

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. —Ephesians 5:15-16

'Be still, and know that I am God!' —Psalm 46:10

For years I have been amused by the term “active living,” which has become something of a motto for the retirement communities of the world. These communities have rightly sought to keep a positive view of life, even in its final years and accompanying limitations, and it is commendable that this attitude is promoted. I have, however, been a little concerned for the overuse of this term, for too much of a stress on activity and developing abilities can ignore and deny the important matter of dealing honestly with life’s very real limitations. One day, after having read a few too many “active living community” brochures, I decided that I would someday establish a much-needed alternative.

A pastor friend agreed to go with me on the venture and we determined to build the first “inactive living community,” a place for folks who have already done enough and are ready for some rest. Ray was excited about the venture but also insisted that an inactive living community does not mean having no activities at all. We will have classes on such things as operating a recliner, or developing full mastery of the TV remote control. Art classes could include watching Bob Ross painting videos, while of course doing nothing ourselves. Participants would be encouraged, however, to occasionally shout, “You go, Bob!”

It would appear that Ray and I have gotten our comeuppance for being such smart-alecks as we now seem to all be living in an inactive living community and the joke has taken on a new look since the virus. In days like these we do well to reconsider the philosophy of active living. This is a very biblical approach to life as Paul reminds us in Ephesians 5. Life is a series of opportunities which need to be recognized and seized, for time is wasting! Let us keep on finding more and more ways to remain active and productive despite the restraints. But we must also be realistic and deal with the inactivity which has been thrust upon us. If our proposed retirement community would have a motto, I suppose it would be the psalmist’s command to *'Be still, and know that I am God!'* and there is much to be learned from this timely exhortation.

The psalmist’s words cut to the heart and feel a bit like a scold, as most of us need to be scolded on this matter. We are not good at being still, and while this command to

'Be still' gets our attention, it does not give us the needed instruction to find a life attitude of stillness. To understand the fuller meaning and actual doing of a life of stillness we must examine and meditate upon the whole psalm, for this lovely song is meant to usher us into the place of quiet rest. Some activity is required in finding our rest, and it begins with the title of the psalm, listed in many Bibles. It is called "a song," and while we no longer have any of its musical notations, we still have a command to sing! Have you sung lately? And how do you expect to enter into the Lord's peace if you don't sing? Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress" was inspired by Psalm 46, so one might suppose that singing his hymn would come close to singing the psalm. If we want to claim a sense of peace and stillness, then we had better start singing!

The psalm is an invitation to celebrate the Church, the City of God, in which we find security and life. The tumult and danger of the outside world is also mentioned, but the assurance is made that we are safe in God's care and presence. The world is in chaos, but our God triumphs, and with the assurance of that victory comes the call, *'Be still, and know that I am God!* This is more than a command to sit still. It is an invitation to joy and peace.

Like it or not, we are now living in inactive living communities, but be glad as God is with us and there is still much to do. Our instruction can be found in Psalm 46, so let us meditate upon this divine instruction and live as Psalm 46 people.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

Psalm 46: For the Director of Music. Of the Sons of Korah. According to *alamoth*. A song.

¹ *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

² *Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;*

³ *though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.*

⁴ *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.*

⁵ *God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.*

⁶ *The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.*

⁷ *The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

- ⁸ *Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.*
- ⁹ *He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.*
- ¹⁰ *'Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.'*
- ¹¹ *The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.*