

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Thursday, March 4, 2021

A Faithful Friend

*I remember my afflictions and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall.
I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.
Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:
Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions
never fail.
They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
I say to myself "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."*

—Lamentations 3:19-24

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear.

—Joseph Scriven, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"

I did not spend much time considering the presidents in this February now past, but some weeks after Lincoln's birthday I heard an interesting fun fact about him on the radio. He had a dog named Fido. I have never met a dog named Fido, but it is a name associated exclusively with dogs. Did Lincoln popularize the name? It is a great name for a canine, for it means "faithful," and what can be more loyal and faithful than a dog? We can be sure that Mr. Lincoln could have used a faithful four-legged friend in those dark sad days of the Civil War.

While I am not a dog fanatic, I have come to appreciate them. For ten years we were blessed to have Buddy the Wonderdog in our household. He was truly a faithful friend and I miss him, and the virtue which I most appreciated by far was his loyalty. Stories of canine faithfulness abound. The most famous and celebrated Fido was a dog in Italy who was adopted by Soriani, a brickyard worker. He found Fido wounded on the roadside, took him home and nursed him to health. Each day Fido would follow Soriani to the bus stop, and each day he would be there to greet him at day's end. These were the war years, and at the end of 1943 there was a bombing raid which destroyed the brickyard and killed Soriani. Soriani did not return home, but each evening until his death fifteen years later, Fido waited loyally by the bus stop. Dogs are a faithful creature.

Word has it that the dog pounds of the world have done well through this pandemic. In the sad isolation of these days, and the extra days we spend at home, either unemployed or for working from home, many have taken on four-legged friends to brighten their lives. For years it seemed that my neighborhood had more dogs than children. Up until a year ago the kids were gaining on the dogs, but in most recent

times the furry ones have again gotten the upper hand. More and more cars have stickers which boast of the driver's affection for their dog. It appears that the world is looking for a faithful friend.

We can be glad that God gave us dogs, and beyond this thankfulness we should remember and celebrate the faithful God who taught these creatures to be so loyal. God has always been faithful to us, even when we have been faithless, and the giving of His Son is proof. In light of this awe-inspiring canine virtue, it is easy and tempting to scorn the human race for our ability to be disloyal and lacking in faithfulness. Perhaps a better response is to examine our own lives and to offer a simple prayer: "Lord, make me as loyal and caring as my dog." Now *there* is a challenging goal for Lent!

These are days when we can all use a friend, or two, or three, or more! Or better yet, let us cherish the words of the Proverbs which celebrate the loyalty of Christ our truly loyal friend: *A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.* (18:24)

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

O God our Father, we would thank thee for all the bright things of life. Help us to see them, and to count them, and to remember them, that our lives may flow in ceaseless praise; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

—John Henry Jowett, 1846-1923