

5/17 /09 "God with Us"

Psalm 139:7-10

If we want to lead a healthy life, one thing is absolutely essential. It is the confidence that life is worth living. If we lose that confidence, we become depressed and lose direction.

What is it that makes our human life truly worthwhile?

This question brought home to me when my mother became old and sickly.

My mother started to show signs of dementia in her mid-80s. In her last few years she was bed ridden and unable to speak.

The question that haunted me was this: what is it that makes her life worthwhile in the last stage of her life?

Philosophical and scientific definitions of the human did not help me. They say that what makes human life human is the ability to reason. But my mother could not even think.

They say what makes human life human is the ability to use language. But she could not utter even a single word.

They say what makes human life human is the ability to tell right from wrong. But all she knew was pain.

So philosophical and scientific answers were no help at all. The only helpful answers were religious ones.

In Psalm 139, we read the following words. "Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast."

The psalmist makes it clear that God in the most high makes our human life truly human. God in heaven hears our cries. He shouts encouraging words from a far distance.

But I was not completely satisfied with the Psalmist. I wondered, "Does he know as his own the utter loneliness and desolation of a 90 year-old dying woman?" Somehow God in the most high was not as comforting as I hoped.

I realized then that what sustained me and my wife was God in Jesus Christ. He came down to us in the frontline trenches, so to speak, where we live and face dreadful questions of life's ultimate meaning. Jesus Christ himself experienced the utter loneliness, despair, pain and death for us.

That is to say, in Jesus we encounter God in the lowest depth of our human existence.

God did not remain in the highest heaven. He came down to the lowest depth of our life to identify himself with us. That God is the rock of our salvation. He is our fortress. He is our anchor. He is the ultimate source of the worth of life.

Thanks be to God.