



Wednesday Prayer

10th Sunday after Pentecost – How our needs are met

Am I a God near by, says the LORD, and not a God far off?

Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? says the LORD. Is not my word like fire, says the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?

Jeremiah 23:23, 28-29

Mental health workers spend time assisting their clients in getting basic human needs met. People are happier with access to food, water, and shelter, when we feel connected to others, when we can experience some successes, and when we can genuinely say we have a purpose in life. It helps to have someone who loves and encourages us and whom we love and encourage in return. To quote the late MN Senator Paul Wellstone, “We all do better when we all do better.”

But when the needs of our youth are *not* being met, fear, confusion, and vulnerability may develop. Add shame, guilt, depression, or low self-esteem, and a preteen or teen can feel completely disconnected, overwhelmed, and hopeless. When sex traffickers work to get their hooks into young people, they start by seemingly providing all of the needs that the teen feels they don't have: acceptance and belonging, companionship and support, even love—but it's all a lie! Soon the tables are turned, and the trafficker becomes the enemy. Horrific psychological trauma is inflicted on trafficked youth. We as Christian parents, siblings, teachers, coaches, counselors, neighbors, and friends must continue the work to uphold and support all children. This means not just “showing up” for young people, but also having hard conversations. Youth must be able to recognize the difference between “straw” (empty flattery and unkept promises) and “wheat” (life-sustaining values for growth and maturity).

Jeremiah spent forty years trying to make the Israelites understand that difference. What a dedicated worker he would have made today! He condemned false worship and social injustice. He celebrated the people's personal relationships with God as opposed to worshiping graven images and false prophets. He spent much of his life alone, interceding with God for a people who insisted on turning their backs on their Maker (not to mention their prophet!). He spoke of God's plan of repentance and redemption, quoting God saying, “I will build you up again...you will...dance with the joyful.” (Jeremiah 31:4)

False prophets will continue to tell their lies, but God has true prophets who will speak with commitment and discernment. Perhaps one of the most important messages Cherish All Children can put forth is to help young people and their caregivers recognize false messaging and seek God's live-giving Word instead.

Lord, we feel your Word as “fire” in our hearts and as “a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces.” Help us meet the high calling to walk with our precious youth as they navigate this troubled world. Amen.

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