



What Matters?

I wake up each morning and begin with the question “what matters.” That question is not easily answered nor always apparent. What matters?

We are surrounded by distractions too numerous to mention. Issues and circumstances call for our response and occupy precious time and energy. This leads to a kind of paralysis that produces tiredness and fatigue, leaving little creativity for envisioning a life together.

I have been working with a passage of scripture that has spoken to me and continues to speak. That is the story of the cloud and fire, which acted as a GPS for the Hebrews' wanderings in the wilderness. That account is found in Exodus 13:21-22 and more fully in Numbers 9:15 and following.

My most recent meditations are reflections on the cloud by day, and its significance for God’s guidance. When the cloud rested, the Hebrews camped. When the clouds moved to the head of the line, the Hebrews followed, not certain where they would end up next.

The cloud by night was seen as fire. A pillar of fire. This contains similar imagery to the cloud by day, a guide into the future. However, some unique understandings implicit in the fire speak to our situation.

Let’s reflect on the meaning of the night. Nighttime or darkness can be difficult to navigate. Without light of some kind, one is always stumbling over objects. Think of getting up in the middle of the night for whatever reason. Shoes become large. Items that were not put away become stumbling blocks. Doorways are difficult to locate.

In addition, nighttime is not a prime time to initiate movement. Try packing, loading up your vehicle, or dressing children in the middle of the night for a trip. These tasks are certainly possible but not necessarily convenient.

As I look at the cloud of fire, I see at least two applications:

God’s timetable is not for our convenience. We move at God’s convenience, not ours. Our role is to be ready when the summons comes to call us to move to another destination.

The second contains the promise. There will always be just enough light for the next steps. Light illuminated by fire at night is not as vivid or clear as during daylight hours. It doesn’t matter. The promise is that whenever the summons of God occurs, we will have enough to guide us on our way.

As I view our life together as a district, the imagery of wandering and of seeking light are real. I have been in conversation with many of you who are hungry for another way of being together. Defining ourselves by the call of Jesus compels us to move forward together in mission and ministry.

This common hunger needs attention. There have been numerous conversations with many of you regarding “trajectories of hope.” Life-giving streams emphasize our heartfelt desire to be all we can be as citizens of the Kingdom. I yearn for that.

Although the precise structure and mechanism for identifying and processing these trajectories are not yet in place, we need to give voice to those.

What matters? What matters to me at this moment of our life is to assist us in giving voice and substance to a “hope-filled” future that stands as a witness to another way of living.

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