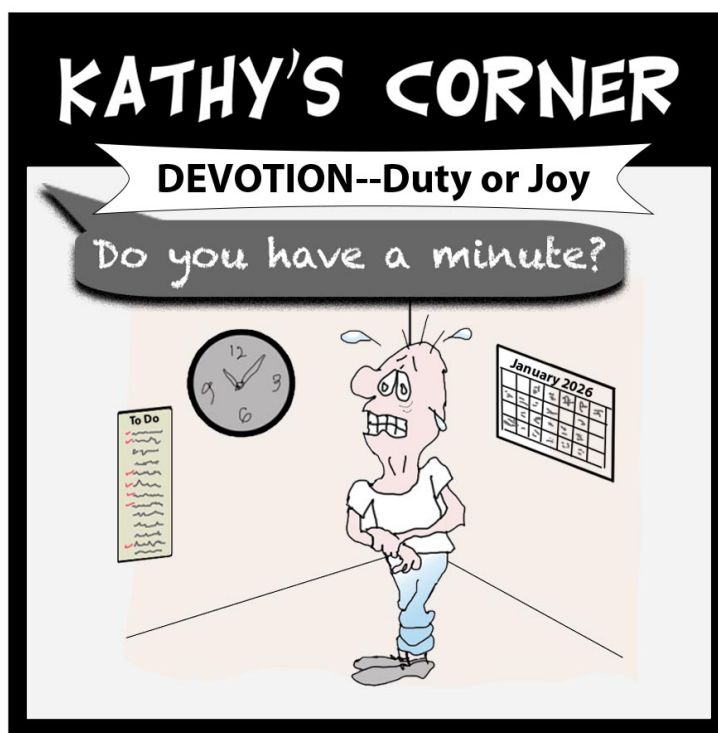


DEVOTION—Duty or Joy?

As I walked through my home this morning, I was so thankful for the Lord's provision. I live in a home that I think is about as old as I am—and that is OLD! Yes it could certainly use some improvements, updates, repairs; but it is exactly what the Lord has provided for me, and I am thankful. I was thinking about something I had read in Proverbs last week, **"First, help me never to tell a lie.**

Second, give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs. For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name." (Proverbs 30:8-9 NLT) I thought how wise this was when I also considered that "Godliness with contentment is great gain." **Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. After**

all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. (1 Timothy 6:6-8 NLT) How blessed we are with so much more!



How can people be truly thankful if they are never content? Are we satisfied with what God has provided? Do we trust Him to provide for us within His wisdom? It seems most people are never satisfied. The text which follows in 1 Timothy talks about the destruction that comes upon those with a desire for wealth, and how the love of money is the root of all evil.

I think that there is an honorable desire for more when the "more" we are seeking is not for ourselves, but for service to others in the name and character of Jesus. I want to be blessed to be a blessing. My needs have been amply met; I have more than what meets my basic needs, but I want to be a blessing.

Jesus pointed out a lack in the Pharisees' devotion. **"What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things."** (Matthew 23:23 NLT) Jesus was pointing out that they should be doing those things they were doing, but they were missing the things that matter most. It is always a matter of the heart. Jesus' heart is a heart of giving and serving. We say He lives in us. Do we have *that* heart?

Giving and serving reward us with satisfying moments—moments when we are aware that He is indeed living in us, and we in Him. There are also special moments—satisfying moments of intimacy in our own lives, or at least in mine, when I "sup with Him, and He with me." It is a promise for all of us. **"Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends."** (Revelation 3:20 NLT) Many of us have committed this verse to memory for the purpose of evangelism; and that is good, as it suggests the relationship we can have

when we are born of the Spirit. The King James version says, **I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.** I love this! Those moments when I “sup with Him, and He with me” — when I am enveloped by His presence, surrounded by His glory. It produces a joy in me that cannot be contained. Many times there is a burst of tears followed by a heartfelt song and a realization that the **Holy Spirit is joining me in worship.** That is when He is my glory! Those are the moments you don’t want to step away from. We may worship differently, but I think you know what I am talking about.

There is encouragement from assembling, being with others in fellowship. There is wisdom and understanding to be gained from wise teaching and instruction of our leaders or “mentors;” prayers and healing and deliverance available through the saints, and much more available through “the body,” but there are things no person can do *for* you. We have to do these things for ourselves. Do you also come alone, away from all others and all else? There is an intimacy available to those who came alone. This is an important part of the relationship that we each have opportunity to develop. It is touchingly expressed in a song by Charles A. Miles—*In The Garden*. I have included a couple of verses:

**I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses.**

Refrain:

**And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.**

**He speaks, and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,
And the melody that He gave to me
Within my heart is ringing.**

There is a dutiful devotion with its rewards for diligence and faithfulness. There is a devotion of joy that comes from serving with love for the One to whom you are devoted. There is a joyful devotion of intimacy with God *which He also enjoys*.

**Arise, my darling.
Come away, my beautiful one.
My dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the crevices of the cliff,
let me see your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.**

(From Song of Songs 2:13-14 CSB)