

Wednesday, June 24, 2020

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.'"

Revelation 2: 12-13

It's getting a little hard to remember that I am still living in the United States of America. I can remember watching uprisings in other countries over the years and thinking, "they would never tolerate that kind of thing in America." I remember how thankful I was to live in the United States of America, and I still am very thankful to live here. But I have to admit, it's starting to feel like I am living in another country.

In the Bible passage above, Jesus speaks to the church in Pergamum and says, "I know that you are living in a place where Satan has his throne." What does THAT mean? It means that the Christians in Pergamum were living out their faith in a city that allowed Satan to have his way. That's hard to do! It's hard to be a Christian – or I should say, it's hard to live out your Christian faith – in a place where Christianity is not welcome.

I am aware of the fact that we as Christians should not take our religious freedom for granted. At the risk of making this devotional sound like a political statement, it seems to me that what began as a thing called "Freedom of Religion" is slowly morphing into something that might be referred to as "Freedom FROM Religion." I just want to prepare you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, for the possibility that you and I as followers of Jesus will soon become a smaller minority in our country than we have been.

What does this mean? Does it mean that we should hide out? Should we give up on people, or lose our missional zeal? Absolutely not. In fact, it means quite the opposite. We need to let our light shine all the more brightly. Whatever "basket" we have been using to cover our "light" needs to be tossed aside. Our level of compassion for people needs to increase in the same way that Jesus had compassion on the crowds because they were "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Our country needs us now more than ever to somehow let our light shine. Our country needs Jesus. Satan is setting up his throne right in our midst, and he is smugly taking up residence right in our backyards. We need to remain faithful to the Name of Jesus the same way the believers in Pergamum did. Jesus commended them for "not (denying faith in Him), even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells."

That faithful witness, Antipas, may have lost his life, but his faithfulness gained him a place in heaven, and his witness gave encouragement to other believers who needed to be spurred on to faithfulness as well.

Be at peace! The Lord is at hand! Satan's throne is little and it is temporary! The throne of Jesus is the real throne. The Bible tells us that the day will come when "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2: 10-11)

God's Peace!
Pastor Jim