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Daily Devotion



The Lifelong Shepherd

As some of you know and others will now know, my sister is struggling with memory loss. After being at Wellspring Lutheran Home since February, she is still not able to find her own room. While she recognizes some close family members, she has forgotten many people who were significant in her life. She knows she has a home in Millington, but does not remember what it looks like. Repeatedly she has been asked if she knows the president or the year. Both remain a mystery. She does not know her age and is often uncertain about the number of siblings she had. I only share these things so you are able to understand the extent of her memory loss. Alzheimer's can quickly strip us of the memory of most everything that is important to us. Recently she was hospitalized for the first time in her life. She was born at home and had managed to escape being in the hospital, for any reason, for all 84 years of her life. Even though she was quite unaware of her surrounding and all the procedures leading up to getting a pacemaker, she was a bit uneasy when she was being wheeled toward the room where she would be prepped for surgery. I had explained things to her the best I was able. I was allowed to be with her until she actually entered the operating room. When I noticed her uneasiness, I gently called her name and asked God to give me words that would bring her peace. Calmly, I spoke these words, "Irene, you're going to be ok. Remember, the Lord is your Shepherd, you have everything you need." I was totally shocked when she immediately responded with, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul, He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his names sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me..." She went on to perfectly recite the entire Psalm in the King James version. I was comforted. I was at peace. I learned an important lesson. I learned it is more important to know your Shepherd than it is to know the President. It is more important to know you have a home in heaven than to know what your earthly home looks like. Peace is found by resting in the arms of Jesus rather than being able to find where you are supposed to sleep on earth. Our memories last a lifetime (and sometimes not our whole life), but living with Jesus lasts forever. While my prayers for her and the surgeon continued, I also paused to thank God for Christian parents and the Lutheran school where she learned those words. I'm certain my dad helped teach her those words. It was his favorite Psalm. He often spoke it and sang it and lived it. I know because he taught me the same. Today, you have the privilege of being used by God to implant His hope, wisdom and comfort in your children so they will be prepared to face the days ahead of them, with or without you, but never without our God, our lifelong Shepherd. Thankfully, most of us will not see our children when they have Alzheimer's. Most of us will not sit at their deathbed. Or will we? You see, those seeds of faith God enables us to share so the Spirit can plant them in the hearts of our children, will be there every day of their lives and they will especially be aware of them on the days they need them most. It really is, and always will be about Jesus! Learn from Him. Teach your children about Him. Rest in Him because the Lord is your Shepherd, you have everything you need.

By Elaine Bickel