

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

Dear Members, Friends, and Guests of Desert Hills Lutheran Church,

The little book I ordered came last week, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It was the last thing published by Bonhoeffer before the Nazi's shut down his writing. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hung on Monday, April 9, 1945. The day before Bonhoeffer had conducted a Sunday service for some prisoners. One of the prisoners was Payne Best, a British officer who wrote, "Bonhoeffer always seemed to me to diffuse an atmosphere of happiness, of joy in the smallest event in life, and of deep gratitude for the mere fact that he was alive... He was one of the few men that I have ever met to whom his God was real and close..." Payne Best was there at the last Sunday worship in a cell when the door opened and two evil-looking men in civilian clothes came in and said: "Prisoner Bonhoeffer, get ready to come with us!" These words 'Come with us' had come to mean one thing only—the scaffold. We bade him good-bye—he drew me aside, "this is the end, but for me the beginning of life." ... The next day at Flossenburg, he was hanged." (pp.83-84)

Bonhoeffer took Martin Luther's lead and used the Psalms as millions before, as his prayer book. Luther said of the Psalter; "It penetrates the Lord's Prayer and the Lord's prayer penetrates it, so that it is possible to understand one on the basis of the other and to prim them into joyful harmony." (p.16)

Bonhoeffer then gives a very brief summary covering the different kinds of psalms and their themes of Messiah, Life, Guilt, Suffering, Enemies, Law, Creation and more. He closes this little book with a quote from Martin Luther, "Our dear Lord, who has given to us and taught us to pray the Psalter and the Lord's Prayer, grants to us also the spirit of prayer and of grace so that we pray with enthusiasm and earnest faith, properly and without ceasing, for we need to do this; he has asked for it and therefore wants to have it from us. To him be praise, honor, and thanksgiving. Amen" (p. 63)

I started on August 16 to pray the Psalms. I've read the psalms but had not really prayed them. On this Wednesday, I commend to you perhaps a new discipline, praying some verses of the Psalms every day.

Some of you I may see on Saturday or Sunday. If not, stay well and be safe.

Blessings,

Pastor Martin