***Pastor Devotions* – Peace and Grace to you in the Name of Jesus Christ our Redeemer**

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As we walk through each day and navigate our way through ups and downs, joys and concerns, happy moments and heartache, it becomes very clear that this earthly life is anything but redundant, mundane or one dimensional.  Yes, we can feel at times that we are stuck in a rut.  But the truth is we all have our peak and valley moments.

So, how do you find balance when you feel as if the world is weighing you down?  Where do you go, what do you do to find your time of peace?  For many, our faith is an important anchor during these times. Understanding that there is something greater than ourselves and that we can give up our fears and troubles to God when things get rough is especially appealing in times of uncertainty, disappointment and even exhaustion caused by stress and anxiety.  But boy, there are days when we need an extra reminder, or two, of God’s love for us.  Even the people of Phillippi needed Paul to remind them of whom they belonged to when Paul wrote them these words: “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.  Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done.  Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.  His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”(Philippians 4:6-7)

Friends, as the Lenten season approaches, I encourage you to step out of the daily grind, resist the temptation to overload your schedule with too many events and gift yourself time with God in your favorite setting.  Jesus said, “I am leaving you with a gift-peace of mind and heart.  And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give.”(John 14:27.) Are you ready to receive this blessed gift from God? Are you willing to share with Him your roses of the day and your thorns of the day as well?  If the answer is yes, you must then also acknowledge that you cannot do so by squeezing God in.  This means stepping away from this, that and the other thing and connecting with the one who calls you His beloved with your full attention.  One of my favorite hymns is “Spirit Song” written by John Wimber and the chorus of this hymn says: “Jesus O Jesus come and fill your lambs…”

My dear friends, if you are ready to be filled by the Spirit, I offer to you that there is a place you can start.  Beloved communities of faith centered on Christ’s love are praying for His children to come back home to be centered in His presence.  To come back home and find peace  — to come back home and find joy in union with each other.  The hands of Christ are here for you.  Do not be troubled, for it is time to back home to your Lord.