

Leaves Of Hope #8

Family Devotion written by C.M. Gullerud

Lord, we come before Thee now,
At thy feet we humbly bow;
Oh, do not our soul disdain!
Shall we seek thee, Lord, in vain?

Send some message from thy Word
That may joy and peace afford;
Let thy Spirit now impart
Full salvation to each heart.

L.H. 18: verse 1,4

Ecclesiastes 5:1

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.

God was not simply concerned about Moses' feet or his shoes when he told him: "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." God was telling Moses that he was standing in the presence of the holy God and that this called for respect, for reverence, for devotion. The emphasis was not on the outward act, but upon the spirit of which the act was to be an expression. And so our text was intended as an instruction regarding the spirit in which we attend our own public worship.

Those who think that they fulfill a God-pleasing requirement simply by being present in church on a Sunday morning should refer to the words of Isaiah. This is what he said: “When you come to meet with me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? . . . When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.” Isaiah 1:12, 15 Those who walk prudently when they go to the house of God and draw near to hear are quite different from the fools who think that going to church is just a matter of going, that sitting in church is just a matter of sitting there, and that standing for the liturgy is just a matter of standing.

There are questions which may be helpful for a self-examination in connection with our church-going. What does the Word of God mean to me? Why did I come to church this morning? Was it just because it seemed the thing to do since others go? We may not always have given it as much thought as we should. But we do know in advance that the Word of God will be spoken, hymns of praise, thanksgiving and supplication will be sung and prayer will be offered. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper will be administered at an appropriate time. Do you have a desire to be a part of this or would you feel more comfortable doing something else? Is this a matter of

indifference to you? What are your priorities on a Sunday morning?

We have reason to examine ourselves in the light of Jesus' suffering and death which was brought in payment for our sins. As we do this in all honesty and sincerity, we will find that the message of the Savior's atoning work will be especially sweet and precious when we see how much we need his redeeming grace. What a wondrous Gospel it was to the offenders in Jerusalem when Isaiah in the midst of this rebuked a rebellious people and said: "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18 Taking this good news to heart and we will walk prudently when we go to the house of God and draw near to hear his Word. With a full and thankful heart we will come before our God with adoration and say:

Open now thy gates of beauty,
Zion, let me enter there,
Where my soul is joyful duty
Waits for him who answers prayer,
Oh, how blessed is this place,
Filled with solace, light, and grace! L.H. 1:1