

Family Devotion Hour #7

Family Devotion written by C.M. Gullerud

How blest are they who hear God's Word
And keep and heed what they have heard!
They wisdom daily gather;
Their light shines brighter day by day,
And while they tread life's weary way,
They have the oil of gladness
To soothe their pain and sadness. L.H. 48:1

The goodness of which we are partakers at the Lord's hand surpasses all understanding. For we know that far from having deserved it, we should be punished with many stripes. If we look into our thoughts and review our deeds and recall our words for but a single day, we will have to confess that spiritually we deserve solitary confinement, with the customary treatment given to lawbreakers of the worst type. But how does the gracious God deal with us? He feeds us, he dines us, and he gives us to drink. He lets us sit down at his table, where he serves us as the most gracious host. And now, as if this were not enough, he also refreshes us so that our hearts may be lifted up and joy may take the place of sadness. He comes “. . .and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of

mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.” Isaiah 61:3 And so we are told in the twenty-third Psalm that “you anoint my head with oil.”

Oil in the Old Testament was used for many purposes. The vintage of the olive tree was used for consecrating the kings and priests, the tabernacle, the altar, the offerings and sacrifices. It was used for food and for healing. Today we will look upon it in connection with the table that is spread out for us in the presence of our enemies. The oriental traveler, coming in from the journey which may have blasted him with sand and bleached him with the scorching rays of the sun, knew what it meant to have a thoughtful host who would have the cruse of soothing oil ready to pour upon his head. It was a refreshing thing. It caused the spirit to be lifted up. It wiped out the last traces of a strenuous and hazardous journey. This is what it meant to the traveler, when his head was anointed with oil.

And so it is that our heads are anointed with oil. We stand in great need of it. We often come in weary and tired. There are so many things which tend to exhaust us, and we are not now thinking of manual labor. But we are thinking, for instance, of the constant struggle with our old human nature. Even such a spiritual giant as the Apostle Paul felt that same weariness. Here is what he said:

“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” Romans 7:24 In writing to the Corinthians, he said: “I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.” 1 Corinthians 2:3 We can hear how tired and weary he was as he said to the same Corinthians in the second epistle: “Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” 2 Corinthians 5:2-4

Yes, there come times when we become weary and are moved to groan in the spirit, earnestly desiring to be rid of this ash heap of a body. But then come the times of refreshing, when God pours oil upon our heads. He himself anoints us with the oil of gladness. He makes the heart to rejoice and gives renewed vigor and strength. This he gives according to our needs. When it seems as though it would be impossible to go on, then, just at the right time, the time of refreshment comes. And we see what an understanding and considerate God we have. This has been proven over and over again, as he has anointed our heads with oil.

All this we enjoy for the sake of God's own Son, who died for us that we might live. We, who live together as God's children, should indeed rejoice because of these benefits and say: "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore." Psalm 133

PRAYER: O Lord God of mercy and grace, we thank you for your favor which you have shown to us undeserving sinners. When we have fallen into sin, you have forgiven us. When we have been downcast and discouraged, you have lifted up our spirits. When we have been weak, you have strengthened us. When we have been sad, you have made us to rejoice. For these times of refreshing, we thank you. And we pray that, through your Spirit, we may show ourselves thankful also in our daily walk of life. Turn us away from evil and guide us so that we may walk in the right way, that our days may be marked by praise to the end of life's journey, For Jesus' sake. Amen.