

STAYING CALM: SESSION THREE

ALWAYS CALM...the more anxious we are, the more often we say/do inappropriate things. We feel overwhelmed, act as if we are alone. Back to Paul's great text...

Rejoice in Lord 'always', underline "ALWAYS" not just when we feel like celebrating but ALWAYS REJOICING. Is that even possible?

In good times, it's easy to rejoice; in hard times, we just survive. Jesus was ALWAYS CALM. He stayed calm not by being divine but by being spiritually prepared. He didn't live in a bubble; he was under constant pressure. His disciples knew that he could stay calm; they just didn't know if they could. Staying calm is better than cleaning up the mess of inappropriate our words/actions after we have a meltdown. A calm person sends a signal that GOD IS PRESENT. We can't know what God is doing; we can trust that HE IS UP SOMETHING GOOD. Left unchecked, our anxiety can corrode our trust in God.

THE MAN WITH THE PRETTY COAT...we know Joseph as Jacob's spoiled brat, parading around his pretty coat, flaunting his favoritism. His brothers toas him in a pit and when he hit bottom, he landed with a thud: he is taken to Egypt and sold to the highest bidder. We all HIT BOTTOM or we hope that it is bottom. Egypt isn't just a PLACE; it's a CONDITION/STATE OF MIND. Our plans fall apart. What will we do when life breaks our hearts, and we think GOD HAS LET US DOWN? What would Joseph do: curse God or persevere? Where was God? Joseph came out of every disaster smelling like a rose. Ten against one, his family tried to ruin him, yet he refused to be A VICTIM. A refrain runs through his story:

OVER 20 TIMES, "LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH" I ONCE THOUGHT IT MEANT, "HE TRUSTED GOD BECAUSE THINGS WORKED OUT FOR HIM. NO! THINGS WENT WELL BECAUSE HE TRUSTED GOD, EVEN IF HIS OWN PLANS DIDN'T HAPPEN.

NOTHING IS OUTSIDE OF GOD...due to his brothers, he lands in Egypt yet rose to power, and saved Israel from starvation. He gave God THANKS when he might've given GOD LIP. Nothing is outside God's care. He isn't removed from anything; nothing is coincidental. There is mystery in Joseph's life and in every life. God GUIDES but he doesn't CONTROL. Forget making sense of it. Weren't there easier ways than slavery or exile for God to get Joseph where he wanted him to go? Life can knock us down; no one escapes unscathed. To stay calm, live beyond anxiety, we should not multiply the PROBLEMS WE HAVE with the PROBLEMS WE MIGHT HAVE. We must trust that God is near. Trust it as a REALITY, not just as a STATEMENT OF FAITH. As God was WITH JOSEPH, he is also WITH US.