

Tuesday, September 27, 2017 - Day 269 – Ezekiel 3-4, Psalm 71, I John 1

I often say that in the world of the sacred and divine, there are no coincidences. Within the assigned scriptures, I found very little that moved me to reflect until I read Psalm 71. Verse 9; “Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent.” It is most fitting at this moment in my life.

My wife, Fran, and I are very blessed to have friends who have a beautiful home in the Poconos near Lake Harmony, and who every year says that we both need a time to relax from our crazy schedule in our ministry in Chester, so here are the keys, go up for two weeks, do nothing and relax for a bit with no commitments. Today starts our last week, and it has been a much-needed relaxation and stress-free period. However, at 71 years of age, both of our backs are going, along with my right knee, which is bone on bone. It took two epidurals in my back to even get here and three days after we return, I am having a knee replacement. Two days after that, our son and his family of 4 small children are visiting for the better part of a week which is wonderful, except our home becomes one of sheer chaos. In addition, with the Fall season, my commitments at Widener University brings me giving a series of instructional events for new faculty, administrators, the international students and students who are receiving scholarships for civic engagement activities, as well as student’s who will be doing internships and practicums in Chester that I call “Chester-101W, the history, culture and issues of the City of Chester”. Add to that the Fall planning of programs and events at Chester Eastside Ministries, located at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church where I am on the board, an officer of the non-profit corporation and on three committees. How will all that fit into my physical situations? When will I even be able to drive to Chester?

My prayers have been of recent to include; please make the surgery a success with quick recovery, that it won’t adversely affect my back, guide the hands and judgements of the surgeon and so forth. I have even reminded God, that my work in Chester is for his Children and that God has called me to do it. I guess that I am trying to use a little guilt in there.

And then I read the writer’s prayer from Psalm 71, “Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent.” The writer must have had similar circumstances going on in his/her life to write that “prayer”, which is so similar to my prayer. It reassures me that I am not alone or the only one going through similar or for many, far worse circumstances and that comforts me and gives me confidence that the Holy Spirit will be part of the surgery, healing and my comings and goings. Truly, that I read this now is another “no coincidence”.

I must add one more thought, my father use to say, in a deep slow voice, “Son, this getting old is not what it is cracked up to be.” And I would answer him back with, “Yes, Dad, but think of the alternative.” Well, I now give him far more credit for wisdom than I ever gave him as a young man. An added benefit.

By The Rev. Dr. James Ley