

## FINDING GOD IN THE MIDST OF THE MESS...

Maybe it's because I'm getting older. Maybe it's because so many things seem to be spinning out of control. Maybe it's because so many people seem fearful and our society seems more and more divided. Maybe the gloom and cold and gray days of winter are making things worse. In any case it seems that left to our own devices we are making a mess of our relationships, our society, and our planet. I, for one, don't like living in a state of powerlessness and anxiety, but good news is often hard to come

by and I sometimes find myself crying out "where are You, God?"

Maybe it's about the way one looks at things--something like the story of the difference between the optimist and the pessimist. The pessimist is given a pony for his birthday and begins to moan about all the work he'd have to do to take care of it. The optimist walks into

the smelly, filthy barn and rejoices. "With all this manure, there's got to be a pony here somewhere." Like I said, it could be the lens I'm looking through that colors how I see things. Would it be different if I believed that in the midst of all this apparent chaos, there's grace and God is at work?

Spending time with the Scriptures and in prayer reminds me that what is happening is nothing new. People have been in this place many times before throughout history and though it may not take the current ache away, it gives me confidence that God never leaves and is always beside us.

Like the father of the prodigal son, God allows us to make our own choices which are often selfish and inconsiderate—and then deal with the consequences. When we begin to regret what we have done—and sometimes even before because he loves us so much—God rushes to us, embraces us, doesn't rub our noses in it and say "I told you so" and often even uses our missteps and failures to bring about healing—not just for ourselves but often for others as well.

The Big Book of AA says something very similar: "I used to think that being an alcoholic was the worst thing that could happen to me. Now I realize it's my greatest gift." The journey to recovery has often enabled people to develop a deeper relationship with God and with others and what seemed to be disaster has become gift to be shared.

Each of us has a part to play in changing things for the better and we all come up with our own excuses not to act and trust in God's promise. We find that heroes from the Bible were much like us. When told she would have a baby at her advanced age, Abraham's wife Sarai laughed. Moses put conditions on his response to God's call. "I need to know your name before I can lead the Israelites out of Egypt." Jeremiah argued that he was too young (though scholars tell us he was middle-aged at the time). Jonah

didn't want good things for his enemies so he tried to run from God. Peter went back to fishing.

In spite of our waffling, God still invites us and calls us to act. Listen to the prophet Haggai talking to the people of Israel about God's desire to change things and their role in accomplishing this:

*Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? And how do you see it now?*

*... Now be strong, all you people of the land— and WORK! For I am with you—*

*This is the commitment I made to you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit remains in your midst; do not fear! For thus says the LORD of hosts:*

*In just a little while,*

*I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.*

*I will shake all the nations, so that the treasures of all the nations will come in.*

*And I will fill this house with glory— says the LORD of hosts. ...*

*Greater will be the glory of this house than the former—says the LORD of hosts;*

*And in this place I will give you peace—*

Haggai 2:3-9)

Can one person bring about change? Does one drop of water make a difference in the ocean? It affects the drops of water above, below, and on each side of it—and so can we. And in this process we find God has always been with us.

So off with the gloomy faces and sense of helplessness! It's time to get busy!!

~ Angela Anno

