

Monday, December 15, 2014

But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

The opportunity to be part of a First Pres study group to Israel was a blessing beyond my imagination. The insights provided by Dr. Jim Martin and my fellow travelers at dozens of Biblical settings brought the Bible to life and I experienced a deep immersion into the presence of God.

Of all the spectacular moments experienced, if I had to pick, the one most impactful to me was during the study discussion on the Arbel Cliffs overlooking the Sea of Galilee, the Plain of Magdala (home of Mary Magdalene) and the region of Capernaum. Dr. Jim pointed out that during Jesus's 3½ year ministry. He spent more than 90% of His time in Capernaum, a region of less than 10 square miles. His activities around Capernaum were not recorded extensively in the Bible because they were common knowledge among the people of the region.

Can there be any question of the incredible power and presence of the hand of God that one 'man', who spent so little time in such a remote spot so long ago, has dramatically changed the world, and affected untold millions of people (including me), during the last twenty centuries?

While traveling through a land that has been in conflict since the beginning of human occupation, I felt God's hand personally when Dr. Jim recited the full text of a familiar prayer written in 1942 by Reinhold Niebuhr:

God, Give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, accepting hardship as a pathway to peace, taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it, trusting that You will make things right, if I surrender to Your will, so that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen!

Skip Hudson