***Startle us, O God, with your truth,***

***and open our hearts and our minds to your word,***

***that hearing, we may believe, and believing trust our lives,***

***this day and all the days that lie ahead,***

***to your love in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen***

Chaos - what comes to your mind? Is it your life, what you will return to when you leave here, what you left when you were put here? What is chaos? Is it seemingly unorganized, no purpose or pattern perhaps violent situations where there is no control. Is it the feeling of throwing your hands up in despair , giving up, throwing in the towel?

Whether it’s wilderness or chaos they share that same sense of being out of control and in a state of confusion and survival mode. We probably all have experienced this, for some of us it may be the only experience, we have had.

Some of the gentlemen here are watching the series Band of Brothers which is about the 101st Airborne and their role in the fighting during WWII. As the war continues, the unit experiences the chaos of war and the limited ability to control events during battles. But during these battles and moments of respite one can see that the soldiers have ways of coping and surviving and perhaps even living during these times. What keeps these soldiers going is knowing their duty, and working together , having each others backs.

Jesus knows his purpose and knows that his back is also covered, this is my beloved, marked by my love. Our baptisms, our status as beloved children does not mean we will not be surrounded by chaos, violence, temptation. **It does mean** that we are not alone and our backs covered.

In his book, Emotional Intelligence, Daniel Goleman recounts a story of an American soldier in Vietnam. His platoon was hunkered down in the rice paddies locked into the heat of a firefight with the Vietcong.

The rice fields in Vietnam are often separated by an earthen embankment, a beam, and on this day, a line of six Buddhist monks started walking along the elevated beam separating the field where the American soldiers lay hugging the ground and the field where the Vietcong were also crouched in battle.

The monks walked directly toward the line of fire, calmly and steadily. They did not look to the left or to the right, they just kept walking. The soldier reported, "It was really strange because nobody shot at 'em. And after they walked over the beam, suddenly all the fight was out of me. It just didn't feel like I wanted to do this anymore, at least not that day. It must have been that way for everybody, because everybody quit. We just stopped fighting."

Knowing who we are and what our purpose is gives us the ability to walk on the beam despite the chaos around us. Being that person who we have been called to be, may stop the fighting and bring some calm to the chaos. In chaos theory small changes cause changes across the system and change the course of the system - the butterfly effect, or maybe a monk effect. If not we still have walked without falling into the chaos. We can remain focused and centered on the Creator.

A little boy was playing and noticed the ladder leaning on the side of the house. He started to climb up. His mother came out and saw him half way up the ladder and just about screamed when the house painter up at the second level of the house motioned her to be silent. He looked down at the boy and said keep looking up at me and keep climbing. The child made it to the top and the safety of the painter’s arms. Keep looking up, keep climbing and you will rise above the chaos, reach the stars, and into the arms of the creator.