

## The Need For Solitude

Too often, as we read these scriptures, we read them too quickly. And as we do that, we sometimes skirt right past some of the most precious words of God's wisdom, words that are intended to instruct and guide and direct us along His narrow path. And that can be so with some of these precious words in our passage for today.

Turn there with me to Luke chapter 4 and follow along beginning with verse 42.

<sup>42</sup>Now when it was day, He (the Lord Jesus) departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him and tried to keep Him from leaving them; <sup>43</sup>but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent." <sup>44</sup>And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee. (Luke 4:42-44)

Most of us are "doers" by nature! It is both who we are and how we respond to the matters and the demands of our day. We wake up each morning with an agenda, and we go throughout our day dealing with one demand after another.

And that sort of personality and behavior has its excellent side. You are in this church this morning partly because you are a doer. Though you may not have realized what was taking place, you sensed a "drawing" from God's Spirit to come and to hear His word, and you responded by becoming a doer. And that is a very good thing. God tells us so in James chapter 1. He tells us

<sup>25</sup> . . . he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it* and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:25)

Sadly though, there are also many other people, who this day, have sensed that same kind of "drawing" from God's Spirit that you had, to go and to be in church, but chose instead not to respond to it, but to do something else instead. Those folks are still doers, yes, just doers of other things.

As we can easily see from these scriptures, Jesus was a "doer", and He busily got about all the many things that He knew that He was supposed to get about doing. But here in our scripture text for today, we see that Jesus knew that He needed to also get about a different kind of "doing".

Here in the simple words of verse 42, we observe a measure of wisdom that we doers too often fail to grasp. It is the wisdom to know when we need to set ourselves apart from all our many daily acts of “doing”, and to find “solitude” for our busy soul, secluding ourselves away from other people and their distractions, and entering into a quiet place where we can commune with God’s Holy Spirit. A place where we can refill our reserves of energy. A place where we can find answers for all the many questions that go unanswered during the course of our busy days. Listen again to these simple words of verse 42.

<sup>42</sup>Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place.  
(Luke 4:42)

These words do not, in themselves, say a lot. But we know from the many other times that Jesus did the same thing, that He knew of the necessity to remove Himself from the demands and the rush of the day in order to refresh and to renew Himself, and specifically to quietly enter into communion and rest with God, His Father.

You and I know very well about the need to rest physically. Our soul can also experience a kind of overwhelming tiredness and exhaustion. We get so very “spiritually tired” and “spiritually exhausted” that we “collapse spiritually”. Some call those experiences “spiritual burnout”. And it can be an awful thing to endure.

It is in those times that our mind and heart and soul question everything that we thought we knew and trusted about God, His provision, His faithfulness, even His very existence.

And that kind of suffering is no “respector of persons”. Even the strongest of believing Christians are vulnerable to those attacks.

It was so in the life of the great theologian, C.S. Lewis. Lewis was a mighty man of faith and had written such books as “Mere Christianity” and “The Chronicles of Narnia”. But then suddenly, without warning, Lewis found himself at the point of collapse, brought on by the death of his beloved wife.

C.S. Lewis had remained a bachelor for the first 50 or so years of his life, but then had met and fallen deeply in love with, Joy Davidman, an American poet with two small children. Unfortunately, after only four short years of marriage, his dear wife became ill with cancer and died. And Lewis was completely devastated by the loss.

In the days that followed her death, Lewis seemed to lose all sense of direction and meaning to life and especially to his relationship with God. During those days, he painfully wrote of his suffering in His journals and at one point asked God the question, "God are you some kind of cosmic jokester, to give me this dear wife for such a short time, only to mercilessly tear her away from me?"

Folks, we each can have moments like those with God, and sometimes those moments can last for a long time. Fortunately, after some long periods alone with God, Lewis was able to work his way through his grief and to recover.

Here in these scriptures, we can read of several "giants of the faith" who went through similar deep struggles. David was one of them and he seemed to struggle often.

And from all the many Psalms that David wrote, we are able to know that He often made those good choices to get alone with God and to pour out his heart to God.

Psalms 139 is an especially good example to us of how we should get alone with God and ponder the wonder, the glory and the majesty of His presence. In those words, David acknowledges that God is ever and always with him, carefully examining every thought he thinks, guiding and directing his path, and convicting him of the many sins that sought to take hold of him.

But folks, the one most important understanding that you and I must accept is that such intimate relationship with God can only come to us as we willingly and intentionally get alone and isolate ourselves with Him.

And again, God is especially generous to us when we get alone with Him in our times of trouble. Yes, we can instead seek counsel and comfort from friends. And we often do, and those friends are often helpful. But folks, our friends are not nearly the comforting friend that we will have in an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus.

As I try to consider some of the things that the Lord Jesus was experiencing as He began to minister to the people God had sent Him to seek and to save, one matter in particular must have been constantly on His mind, that of the coming days when He would have to suffer and to die on that cross. Because that was ultimately the purpose for which He was sent. Yes, Jesus was a healer, and He was a teacher, and a preacher, and He said many wonderful things that we cling to even to this day. But most of all, He was our redeemer, and to be our redeemer, He would have to suffer and to die, and He knew that!

And in His being as the Son of Man, and He truly was fully man, those thoughts would have had to produce some form of fear and hesitation. We know that to be true from the account that we read about as He drew away into another quiet place, the Garden of Gethsemane, on the night before He was crucified. There we know that He wrestled with all sorts of mysterious anxieties.

And so, here in our scripture passage for today, as we see Him secluding Himself away to have some quiet time with His Heavenly Father, perhaps some of the things He was talking to His Father about was how to deal with the “fear” of that impending crisis in His life.

Dealing with the many forms of “fear” is probably one of the most common needs within most all of our souls. Fear has a way of captivating our thoughts and behaviors. And the best remedy seems always to be, as Jesus did, to retreat away from all the difficulties and distractions and to isolate ourselves alone with the Lord. It's there that His Spirit can get control of our emotions and give us comfort and rest.

I'm reminded of a circumstance in these scriptures when the great and mighty prophet of God, Elijah, found Himself suddenly overwhelmed with a feeling of fear. We know from many of his behaviors that Elijah was not accustomed to any form or kind of weakness or frailty. But on this one occasion, he still nonetheless suddenly found himself deep within a struggle with fear.

And as often seems to be the case, Elijah's special dilemma came upon him right after he had achieved a great victory with the Lord, the contest on Mount Carmel between Him and the “prophets of Baal”.

There, Elijah had challenged the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah to a spiritual duel to determine whose god was the greatest. They each prepared a sacrifice, one to the god Baal, the other to the Almighty God, and the rules were simple. Whose ever god sent fire down to burn up the sacrifice was the greatest of all Gods.

The prophets of Baal cried out and cut themselves for many hours, but with no success. Elijah called out to the Almighty God and God responded by sending fire down completely consuming His sacrifice. And then, having defeated the false prophets, Elijah had them all put to death, the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah.

With great courage, confidence and bravery, Elijah had participated in one of the most decisive victories recorded in these scriptures. But then, without

warning, his soul went into a “spiritual meltdown” brought on by a simple threat from the ruthless Queen Jezebel.

Elijah had, I’m sure, been threatened on many other occasions, but for some reason this threat seemed to break down all of his courage and confidence. Listen, in 1 Kings 19, we read

<sup>1</sup>And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup>Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” <sup>3</sup>And when he saw *that*, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which *belongs* to Judah, and left his servant there.

<sup>4</sup>But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers!” (1 Kings 19:1-4)

Again, this seems often to be the case! Immediately after a great victory, we are vulnerable. We have been so caught up in the battle, and we become so spiritually exhausted in the struggle that when we finally do win, our defenses are down and we are then open to the attacks of the devil.

That was so with Elijah and he simply “went all to pieces” when Jezebel made her threats. He ran like a frightened child and hid himself under a tree and in a cave.

But thankfully, although he did not realize it at the time, that was exactly what he needed to do. He needed to get away from the battle, seclude himself in a quiet place and do some real business with the Lord.

And within this account is God’s instruction for you and me. It is as we do this same thing, as we remove ourselves from the noise of the battle, as we pull away into a quiet place, we can then hear the “still small voice of God”. Listen to these words!

<sup>11</sup>Then (God) . . . said (to Elijah), “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; <sup>12</sup>and after the

earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. (1 Kings 19:11-12)

Yes, God's voice can come through anything, a storm, or even an earthquake, or a fire. But here, God is making it clear that He wants us to pull away from the noise of the battle and the storms of life, and to listen carefully for His "still small voice", a voice that we will not hear if we are standing in the midst of those noisy storms.

Elijah was finally able to recover his senses when He got really quiet so that he could hear the "still small voice" of God. Then everything began to return to normal.

Here in our text for today, we see that Jesus understood the necessity for secluding Himself within a quiet place. It was there, in a quiet place, that He too could hear the "still small voice" of God.

What is the wisdom, the lesson, the instruction for you and for me within these simple words of verse 42?

"Now, when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place."  
(Luke 4:42)

The wisdom for you and for me is that we must do the same, and not just once, but often, certainly daily, and even at times, hourly.

The battle is ever and always a constant fact of life. Whether we realize it or not, a spiritual battle is always raging, either openly and obvious, or else, and sometimes worse, deeply within our souls, undetected by us or by the people around us.

What must we do? The answer is clear. You and I must develop an ongoing habit and behavior of drawing apart from the noise of the day, the distractions, the irritations, the demands that swirl around us, and we must intentionally get silent and draw near to the Lord.

How do we do that? For me, I began by simply getting up a little bit earlier each morning and intentionally dedicating a portion of my morning to the reading of my bible, to praying and to surrendering my day's activities, my work, my family, my friendships, my cares and my woes to the Lord.

I say early in the morning because we are told in Mark 1:35 that that was when Jesus seemed to like to have His quiet time alone. Listen!

<sup>35</sup> And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. (Mark 1:35)

It is in those “quiet times” and especially as we pray and as we read the words of scripture that we suddenly begin to truly hear the “still small voice” of God. It is an amazing thing that God does as He speaks quietly to our heart, to our soul, to our spirit and to our mind.

And often, it is also good for us to use the words of some special messenger from God, perhaps some devotional words that God has given to some other saint to pass on to you and to me.

For many years, my wife and my children and I used the daily devotional words of Oswald Chambers, in his book, “My Utmost for His Highest”. And there are many other excellent devotional guides. I would suggest that you use one, along with a good “study bible”.

Folks, this Christianity is a very serious relationship that we have with the Lord. And you and I need to make it be so in our daily lives. Because the warning is, if we are not properly equipped for the spiritual battles that we will encounter each day, the enemy will surely overwhelm us.

So, just as Jesus did, you and I must pull away into a quiet place, a quiet room of our house, perhaps on our porch, maybe in our workshop, or sewing room, anywhere that we will be separated from the noise and the activities of the day and especially the television . . . a quiet place where we can hear the “still small voice” of God.

Listen again to these simple words as we close.

<sup>42</sup>Now when it was day, (Jesus) . . . departed and went into a deserted place.