

The Need to Be Still

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1 Samuel 12:16 *Now then, stand still and see this great thing the LORD is about to do before your eyes!*

I don't watch the news much, but it doesn't take an avid news watcher to know that the world is a bit squirrely right now. There is so much noise, so much fighting, movement, and drama.

From my perspective, there are two things that we can do to help quell the disturbances we feel in our hearts. We can choose to listen to the noise and let the world tell us how bad everything is, or we can be still and let God love us.

First, instead of paying attention to our worries, concerns, and fears, why not tune into Spirit and allow Christ to bubble up through the ego-mud that we are wallowing in? The Book of Job illustrates that bad things are going to happen; and the lesson Job learns is to trust God no matter what. In 37:14 the author says, "Listen to this, Job; stop and consider God's wonders." Where are your thoughts Patrick; where is your focus? Are you even looking for God's good, or are you enslaved by humanity's darkness?

Rather than have the world events, the media, or other people dictate where our thoughts go and how our emotions run, we can choose to be still and not hold anything in particular in our hearts and minds.

Although this sounds simple, it is difficult to do and requires our effort and attention. When we start to feel overwhelmed, we can find solace in the quiet somewhere. Turn off the television, radio, and all screens, and sit in the silence. Repeat a phrase like, “I am at peace in the calm of God’s heart.” Make it up, but repeat it, “I am still in God’s peace and love.” If the distracting thoughts return, as they might, find again your peaceful thoughts. Practice this several minutes at a time until it starts to feel like the place you want to be.

Within us there is a need to be still; to be quiet. It is the soul’s desire to feel spirit moving through us. It is like recharging the batteries on our cell phones.

In Mark 4:39 we read: *He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.* There will be storms and tempests in our lives, and when we wake to the Christ repeat those words, “Peace. Be still,” the gales of emotional and mental upheaval will calm.

“Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10) As a Child of God, in this moment we can be still and experience the loving presence of God that is within us, the protecting presence of God that enfolds us. As a Child of God there is nothing to fear, for God loves us. As we still our hearts and minds, and linger in the presence of God, we know that we are being healed and renewed.

As a Child of God, by being still and quiet we convey God’s light, life, order, and peace. When we become still in an awareness of

God's presence, we are clothed in a glowing mantle of love and peace that emanates to others.

God's presence is everywhere--in every person, in every star, in every tree, in every animal – as a power far greater than any of us or anything created. God is within us -- ready to comfort and reassure us. We needn't ever feel alone in any situation, because God is here with us – always.

So the first step to living in a world of conflict and chaos is to just be still, quiet, and let whatever it is be what it is going to be. We are not in control of what is happening in the world. When we feel the call of Christ, then we can move into action as God wills it; otherwise we can pray and know that God is in control. We cannot fix it, whatever it is, but our stillness prepares us to meet our challenges. The best that we can do is to remain at peace, and trust in God.

The next step is to let God love us. And again, this may sound simple, but for some of us we need to practice allowing God to enter our hearts. We fill our hearts and minds with so much stuff that we block God out. I've heard that EGO is an acronym for Edging God Out. That's what we do. So if we don't allow God in, how can we experience God's love for us?

Another challenge is that some people just have a hard time accepting anything – a gift, a compliment, an act of kindness or service. We hem and haw, and huff and stutter and finally say

‘thank you’. But we aren’t really sincere because we actually don’t think we are worthy of their attentions.

We have a difficult time believing that we are loveable by another human being let alone God. These folks think, “How can God love someone like me? I don’t do anything of value. I don’t even try to reach out to anyone. I’m a loser and a failure and worthless.” Now it may be true that we have all at some time visited those feelings, but some people live there. They are convinced that they are of no value to God or anyone else.

This can be a long, hard, uphill struggle to find the light of truth. But here is the truth, if you believe you are of no value to God – you are wrong. It can’t be expressed any more clearly. God values you as much as any other person that has ever lived or ever will live. God loves you, has plans for you, and has dreams and goals for you. He trusts you and believes in you.

What we do with what we see in our lives is up to us. But if it is challenging, then we are meant to grow and become stronger through what we face. Yes, there are times when we want to give up, and choose to run away and hide from our failures. But that is not the lesson in challenge. We know the lesson; society has been imprinting it upon us for thousands of years. “If at first you don’t succeed then ... try, try again.”

That is the lesson. Get up and go again. It doesn’t matter if people laugh at you. Your anger and feeling of shame is your ego trying to edge God out. What God is whispering is, “Get up Patrick. You are

loved just as you are. Now try it again. Learn the skills; grow stronger. It is through effort and practice that you overcome your challenges. Try again. I made you an achiever, and I believe in you. I didn't give you a spirit of timidity and fear, but a spirit of strength, power, courage, and love. Now let's go at it again."

That is one of the lessons in every challenge. Of course there are many lessons that can be learned, including that one definition of insanity is doing something the same way over and over again and expecting different results. There are times when we have to analyze our defeats and failures so that we can find what it is that is stopping us and make an appropriate change.

The point is this: we are better off when we let God love us. When we accept God's love we feel like we are supposed to feel – like a Child of God. We just need to open the door to our heart. Yes, it can be scary. We all are afraid of what we don't understand, things like: love, forgiveness, letting go, giving, receiving, doing what is right even if it doesn't benefit us; serving others with a joyful heart and not expecting something in return. These can seem like odd and scary things.

Mother Theresa has been attributed with these words, which is a rewording of The Paradoxical Commandments, by Kent M. Keith:

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered.

Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies.

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you.

Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight.

Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous.

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten.

Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough.

Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.

When we accept God's love we can forgive anyway, be kind anyway, be honest and sincere anyway, no matter what anyone else does or thinks. We can give the best that we are because it is the best that God has put in us to give.

It takes effort, practice, and desire but we can do it: we can be still and let God love us. And as we approach that goal, life becomes smoother, our way straighter, and the light brighter. We smile more, as do the people around us. The challenges we face seem a bit less harsh, and the lessons become more transparent. Our yoke is easier and our burden lighter, just as Christ promises.

Let us pray