

## **“In Celebration of Solitude”**

### **1 Kings 17: 1 – 7, 1 Kings 18: 1 – 6**

Richard Foster, in his book, “Celebration of Discipline; the Path to Spiritual Growth”, says this; “In contemporary society our adversary majors in three things; noise, hurry, and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in ‘muchness’ and ‘manyness’ he will be satisfied”. That quote does not carry as much relevance for most of us as it did several months ago. One of the greatest needs of believers has been making time for solitude. For many we have been placed in “solitary confinement” as we are unable to get out among people as we had been accustomed to doing. We find something very similar to this in the life of the prophet Elijah. In the busyness, of his work God told Elijah to “go hide” in the Kerith Ravine. Elijah thought this was unusual but nevertheless he obeyed. In our modern world the busyness we have become accustomed to, the coming and going, has in effect been taken away from us and in a manner of speaking the powers that be have told us to “go hide”. This is a different situation than what Elijah dealt with but I believe the question is, “what will solitude do for us?” As we struggle to acclimate ourselves to this new way of living, “social distancing”, there can be some benefits for us.

1. Solitude will strengthen our relationship with God. Remember, we are told to “be still and know that I am God”. Authentic Christianity is a personal relationship with God that goes beyond religious activity to times of mutual talking and listening. Times of sharing together as we rest in the arms of God. Relationships are strengthened in times of mutual togetherness, quality time that is unrushed and looked forward to on a regular basis. Solitude affords an excellent opportunity to be with God as we think of him and his word. What else will solitude do for us?
2. Solitude will develop our trust in God. Humanism can take over the management of our lives. Even back in Elijah’s day, though he was gifted, courageous and articulate, he had to learn that intelligence and strength are not enough. And for us today, in our scientific and technological age, it is easy to come to the idea that strength and smartness will suffice for life. Remember, Jesus said in (John 15:5), “apart from me you can do nothing”. Times of solitude teach us to trust God. As Elijah started on the journey God directed him to take, I would imagine he was in awe that God was going to provide for his physical needs as he could drink from the brook and the ravens would bring him food twice a day. He learned that someone beyond himself would provide for him in his time of solitude. There is another benefit in solitude,
3. Solitude will help us put life in focus. Life can easily and often get out of focus. As we read of Elijah’s life and work, we find it was filled with both, agonies and ecstasies, spiritual highs and spiritual lows. Circumstances change, life changes but remember, God never changes; he is the same yesterday, today and forever. So believing that God is changeless, getting alone with him will help put life back in focus. In his time of solitude, Elijah was able to be renewed in his faith and obedience to do whatever God directed him do and where to go. In our times of solitude being alone with God and getting our life back in focus we can put God

in the center of our life and the rest of life will be viewed in reference to him. We find yet another benefit in solitude.

4. Solitude will give direction for ministry. God wants a balance in our lives; times of solitude and times of service. God never intended Elijah to stay in the wilderness. Sometime later the brook that had been providing Elijah with water dried up so God sent him to Zarephath to a widow who would provide for him, (be sure to read the story). Then in (1 Kings 18: 1 – 6), God told Elijah to "go present himself to Ahab". Solitude had prepared Elijah for service. So we learn that solitude leads to service and in that order we can expect success in whatever God directs us to do. God first told Elijah to "go hide" and then he told him to "go present himself to Ahab". Our circumstances today are different since we are still under orders to "hide", but solitude should lead to some kind of service to the world. So I would suggest that in your time of solitude you would be asking God to direct you to some kind of service that would be of encouragement to someone around you. I do understand that in many instances we can't go and present ourselves to others as we have been accustomed to doing; let the Holy Spirit guide you into some relevant way to share your faith. Don't forget, a time of solitude is a preparation time for service.

Pastor Garry Culler