

MAKE TIME FOR YOUR SOUL



Scripture:

Psalm 62:5-12

⁵For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. ⁶He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. ⁷On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

⁸Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. *Selah*

⁹Those of low estate are but a breath, those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath. ¹⁰Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

¹¹Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, ¹²and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord. For you repay to all according to their work.

Mark 1:14-20

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news^[a] of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



This is the second in a series of sermons on the soul. Last week I talked about the way skeptical Nathanael searched his soul and recognized Jesus as the Messiah, and followed him because Jesus clearly could see his soul. Nathanael was making assumptions about Jesus before he met him personally. After searching his soul he could see past his prejudice against Jesus being from Nazareth and saw Jesus for whom he really was.

I encouraged you all to show your lack of prejudice by supporting Nicolas’ family and friends at his memorial last Sunday. Twenty of you showed up and provided wonderful comfort and support to them. I am proud of our church family for showing up for

them. They are here because they were so grateful for our church.

This week Psalm 62 talks about the soul. King David who wrote Psalm 62 said, “For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.”

Does your soul wait in silence for God? Do you ever find time to bathe your soul in silence? Silence is a rare commodity these days.

SILENCE IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL

Making time to nurture and soothe your soul can be a challenge.

I grew up in a family that did not sit still very often. There is always work to do on a farm. You

don't just work eight hours and then go home and relax.

But, there was a good opportunity to experience silence out there in the country when the day was done. At night after supper, my Dad would often go outside, sit in his lawn chair, watch the fireflies or look up at the stars. Sometimes I would go with him. It was so dark and silent you could hear owls hooting and coyotes yipping in the distance.

Silence in nature is good medicine for the soul. It is also good for the brain!

Last year the Science section of the Huffington Post had an article by Carolyn Gregoire titled *Why Silence is so Good for Your Brain*. Your brain and soul are connected. Here are four reasons to seek silence:

1. Silence relieves tension and stress.
2. Silence replenishes our mental resources.
3. Silence gives the brain time to be idle and disengaged from external stimuli.
4. Being quiet can regenerate brain cells.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

1st Silence relieves tension and stress.

Educating healthcare workers about the connection between silence and stress relief was an important goal for Florence Nightingale. Being a nurse, I'm a fan.

Florence Nightingale is one person in history I would like to go back in time to meet. During the 1800's in England, Florence was a social activist who developed modern sanitation methods in hospital healthcare with nurses. About silence she said, "Unnecessary noise is the most cruel absence of care that can be inflicted on the sick or the well." Nightingale argued that needless sounds could cause distress, sleep loss and alarm for recovering patients.

Today scientific studies agree with her. Studies show that persistent noise leads to high blood pressure and heart attacks, as well as impairing hearing and overall health. Loud noises raise stress levels by activating the brain's amygdala and causing the release of the stress hormone cortisol,

2nd Silence replenishes our mental resources.

The ceaseless attentional demands of modern life put a significant burden on the prefrontal cortex of the brain, where we do our decision-making and problem-solving. The brain can restore and revitalize when we put ourselves into environments with lower levels of sensory input. In silence, for instance, the quiet

stillness you find when walking alone in nature allows the brain to relax its sensory guard and heal.

3rd Silence gives the brain time to be disengaged from external stimuli.

Introverts like me love this! Your brain is never really idle. But when you give it a break, it taps into inner streams of thoughts, emotions, memories and ideas. Engaging this inner network helps make meaning out of experiences, improves the ability to feel empathy for others, and it allows your brain to be more creative and reflective. Try to silently stop your activity periodically during the day, breathe, and then think, "How do I feel right now? Where am I feeling tense and stressed? Where am I feeling relaxed?" Then focus on relaxing the stressed and tense areas to improve your brain and soul power.

4th Being quiet can regenerate brain cells.

Silence can quite literally grow the brain. A 2013 study on mice, published in the journal *Brain, Structure, and Function*, involved comparing the effects of ambient noise, white noise, pup calls and silence on the rodents' brains.

The researchers intended to use silence as a control in the study, but they found that two hours of silence daily had an impact on the development of new cells in the hippocampus, a key brain region associated with learning, memory and emotion.

The findings suggested that silence could be therapeutic for conditions like depression and Alzheimer's, which are associated with decreased rates of neuron regeneration in the hippocampus.

JESUS NURTURED HIS SOUL

Jesus believed in nurturing his soul. He spent a full forty days in a soul strengthening silent training before he began his ministry.

Notice that just before this Mark 1 scripture I read today, in Mark 1:12-13 it says, "And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him."

Jesus spent forty days preparing for his ministry, alone in the wilderness. He put himself into solitude and silence so he could nurture his soul and prepare for his next three years of ministry. He knew it was not going to be an easy journey, so he spent a long time in silence, prayer, meditation, nurturing his soul in preparation.

PUT YOURSELF IN SILENCE

When you put yourself intentionally in silence and open up your brain to God, it might feel like Satan interrupts your silence, too. He might not ask you to

throw yourself down from the pinnacle of a temple, but our busy brains are naturally resistant to settling down and being quiet.

Everyday it is recommended that you try to be silent for at least fifteen minutes, sitting relaxed, with an open mind listening for God. While you are listening for God you may begin to think about how hungry you are, or how you forgot to pick up something at the grocery store, or how you wonder if the Warriors are going to keep up their winning streak again. The monkeys in your brain will almost always start swinging when you are trying your best to be silent and focused.

But that is okay and normal. As long as you push the interruptions aside when they come to disturb you and go back to being open to God's voice in the silence. After fifteen minutes you will experience that peace that surpasses all understanding that can help you feel more resilient and boosts your immune system and helps you cope with the stress of the daily news.

DYSFUNCTIONAL SYSTEMS

Jesus needed times of silence to deal with the chaos around him. In the days when Jesus walked on this earth, the nations were in an upheaval. Rome dominated much of the developing world, and life was uncertain.

The temple was dysfunctional because the temple leaders were being pulled astray from God's value system to one that admired wealth and power.

Theologian and Duke Divinity school professor, Ismael Ruiz-Millan says, "We still have dysfunctional systems today, including religious systems. We still live with an overwhelming and tragic chasm between rich and poor. Oppressive powers still allow the exploitation of children's bodies, black bodies, and female bodies. We need to repent for these sins and believe that alternatives to such tragic realities exist. Like the fishermen, we need to follow Jesus letting go of whatever makes us allow the dehumanization of God's people."

We all share a call to be instruments of God's work in our world now. There is work today that needs to be done, and God continues to use us as the embodiment of Christ's ministry.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Albert Schweitzer nurtured his soul by answering Christ's call to help others. Schweitzer said, "I don't know what your

destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."

Without support from those closest to him, Schweitzer accepted the call of Christ. His call was to give medical help to those who desperately needed it, but who could not afford that help. First, he went off to medical school even though he had no background in medicine. Then he applied for missionary service and was sent to Africa. He worked there for many years. After he retired from medical missionary work he returned to Europe and advocated for restraints on nuclear weapons testing. Why would such a brilliant man spend so much energy focusing on helping others in Africa?

Schweitzer said, "Life becomes harder for us when we live for others, but it also becomes richer and happier."

Answering the call of Christ is never the easy way. But it is a call to a life that matters for yourself and for others who need you to be their advocate and friend. God believes in you and your soul. You matter, and taking care of your soul matters, too.

So how do you take care of your soul besides being silent and serving others?

RX FOR THE SOUL

Dr. Judith Rich wrote a blog called *RX for the Soul* where she lists Ten Ways to Nurture the Soul.

1. TELL THE TRUTH

Walt Whitman said, "*Whatever satisfies the soul is truth.*" We speak in terms of "searching our soul" when we need to find answers for life's deep questions. We must seek the truth and tell it. The soul settles for nothing less than the truth, like those in the Time's Up movement. Their souls are finally feeling at ease because they are telling the truth they held secret for years. And people are believing them and advocating for justice.

2. SPEND TIME IN NATURE

Spend time in the natural world and allow yourself to connect with all living things and you will find your place in the order of life. You will see yourself as a part of nature. The soul rests in the natural world.

3. EXPERIENCE YOUR EXPERIENCE

Check in with your soul. When grief or sadness are upon you, feel them, experience them. When joy and passion are present, live them out loud! The soul is a glutton for living with gusto!

4. LIVE ON THE EDGE

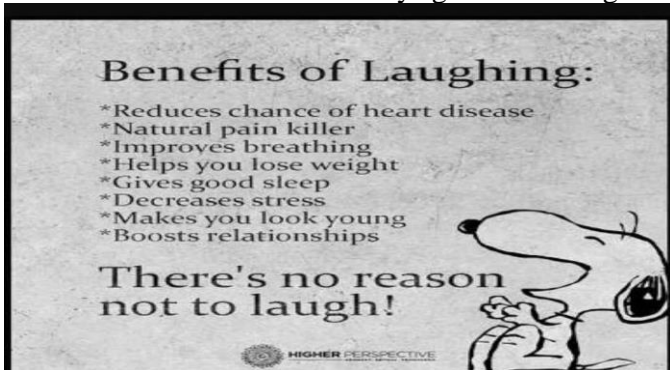
“Man is so created so that when anything fires his soul, impossibilities vanish.” — Jean De La Fontaine, a French fabulist and poet. The soul seeks possibilities that can only be found beyond what is already known, safe and comfortable. The soul calls us to come to the edge, then go beyond. (This is what it takes to fully follow Christ’s call to minister on his behalf.)

5. LEARN TO DANCE IN THE RAIN

Rich says, “There will be times in your life when the sun doesn’t shine. Dance anyway. There will be times when life is painful. Dance with your pain.”

6. UNCONTROLLABLE BELLY LAUGHTER

Laughter is good medicine for the soul. Nothing can uplift the spirit and lighten the soul like a good laugh that explodes through your whole body. Funniest Home Videos are always good for a laugh.



7. MEDITATION IN SILENCE (PRAYER)

To pray is to meditate, which is to enter the soul’s inner temple. Prayerful meditation is like drinking water after crawling through the desert. It quenches the soul’s thirst for silence and stillness. Repeating the quote on page one under the sermon title can help you get into a meditative prayerful state of being.

8. KEEP A JOURNAL

Be sure to record your dreams and other thoughts to help you understand yourself and your soul.

9. LOVE FULLY

At the end of the day, ask yourself: How much did I show love today? Did you love with a big, wide, open, generous heart? Did you love without conditions? Love the unlovable parts of yourself and others and your soul will find peace.

10. BRING A SENSE OF THE SACRED

To the soul, it’s all holy. It’s all sacred. Every moment, every experience, every blade of grass, every bug that crawls, every baby that cries, every tear that’s shed, every gesture of love, every act of kindness, it’s all sacred.

To bring a sense of the sacred to every moment is to live out the mission of the soul. See your soul as sacred. Then everyday treat your precious soul to a bath in silence listening for the voice of God. Then

follow Jesus and serve the Lord with gladness as Albert Schweitzer did. Even if you can’t be a medical missionary, you can soothe other souls with your friendship and love. Amen

Benediction:

There is a saying attributed to William Shakespeare: “The eyes are the windows to the soul.” He got that from the Bible: Matthew 6:22. Be careful where you look.

Look at the world with eyes and ears that nurture your soul. Be kind to your sacred soul and follow Jesus, who knows your soul like an old dear friend.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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