

## **TAKING TIME TO PRAY**

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Once again in Luke, Jesus is off to a mountaintop or wilderness place to pray. This time he takes Peter, James and John. Only in Luke's gospel is the Transfiguration set in the context of prayer. In fact Luke's gospel shows Jesus praying more frequently than any of the other gospels. Jesus shows not only his disciples the importance of prayer but also shows us the importance of prayer.

First of all it is important to notice that Jesus takes the time to pray. Jesus knows how demanding his work is and goes off to pray and usually has the disciples with him. They see Elijah and Moses and experience God. They do not see God, but are engulfed in a cloud and experience God in the cloud. This only happens because they have taken the time to give God the opportunity to break into their lives. If the three disciples had not gone up to the mountain they would have missed the encounter.

However, they cannot stay on the mountain. Whenever anything like this happens, you cannot stay in that moment. As soon as the disciples begin to understand they hear the voice and then it is just Jesus and the three disciples. Jesus is no longer clothed in shining white, he is just their leader Jesus, yet something has changed. The disciples do not say anything as they come off the mountain as they must, and do not tell anyone what they have seen. Their ministry though begins to change from this point on.

What if going to church actually resulted in a change in how what we understand and what we do in the world as a result of that learning? Prayer is one important way that we can ask God to change us, to help us grow into faithful followers, true bearers of the good news.

There is a statement that I want to plant in your minds. "We are not called to go to church, we are called to be the church." Church is not a place or a building. An important way to be church is to pray not just for ourselves but for others in prayers of intercession and not just on Sunday mornings!

Brother Geoffrey the abbot of the Society of St. John the Evangelist in Boston writes of just lifting up a person for prayer to God. Now God already knows what the person needs, but intercessory prayers are our acknowledging that we know the person needs prayer and support. Now you can make up your own prayer it is not hard. You might try this simple three step prayer writing technique.

1. Start by thanking God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit for already being at work in your life or the life of the person you are praying for.
2. State the petition or intercession that you are asking for
3. Close in the name of the trinity.

We all need to take time to go to the mountain to recharge. We all need to take Sabbath time. This is part of what Lent is about.

This is all fine and wonderful some of you may be thinking and I can almost hear some of you saying, Mark I'm busy I've got too much going on. I don't have time to pray. Well maybe you do have time.

Say this jar of rice, which is just about filled to the brim, is your day. Filled with all kinds of things that you need to do. Imagine that these small rocks represent the prayer that you think you don't have time for. Adding some prayer might seem like trying to cram these rocks into your already full jar. However let me show you how you can do this.

*Pour the rice into another container and hand each rock to a different person.*

Now I will pour some of the rice back into the jar. Now here is a morning prayer rock. Just the 5 minute devotion or a reading from Forward Day by Day. Now I will get on with my day and pour in a little more rice. Oh look here you are waiting in line at the store, take that time and instead of being frustrated think of some of the people in your life who need prayer and offer that awareness to Jesus (*drop in the second rock*). Now you have arrived back at home and it's time to change clothes, pause for a moment and drop in another quick prayer time. (*drop in a third rock and add more rice*). It is dinner time take a moment and say grace before you begin to eat. Just say thank you God for caring for me and for my family (*drop in rock 4 and add more rice*). Now it is time for bed take a moment and reflect back as Ignatius teaches on your day and thank God for his presence. (*drop in rock 5 and the last of the rice*). And look it all fits in the jar.

Prayer can be like that. The Rev. Margaret Gunther refers to it as praying in the cracks. Taking the opportunity when you find it. Try this as your Lenten discipline this year. In the narthex I have three prayer resources or Lenten disciplines. One is a leaflet of Daily Devotionals for Families and Individuals. Each of these short services is a half a page and takes just 5 minutes, like I mentioned with my rock demonstration. None of these take very long in fact all together you are talking 20 minutes.

Then there are the Daily Devotions from Episcopal Relief and Development. Each day has a scripture and meditation. There are several apps out there for daily prayer and meditation that are free to download on your phone or tablet. I have several of those linked on the church's website page about our Lenten programs.

Finally there is a sheet of daily thoughts and scripture based on Bishop Curry's The Way of Love. All of these resources are meant for the average busy person to employ during Lent.

If you want even more time for prayer try the Centering Prayer Group at 7:30 on Tuesday nights. If you are a Cursillo person, come to the Grouping Meeting at 6:30 on Tuesday. Join me Thursday at 11:30 for Eucharist and a Bible Study that looks forward to the coming Sunday readings. Come to the Men's or Women's Spirituality Groups 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays.

Now these are all great suggestions, but let us not forget one important message of today's gospel. The disciples hear a voice that says, "This is my son, my chosen. LISTEN TO HIM." In all of these types of prayer at some point we have to stop talking and start to listen. For the answer to our prayers is in the listening and being present.

Friday morning Pastor Steve sent out this psalm and I would like to close this sermon with this thought.

Listen for the One amid the others,  
the one who awakens something lovely in you.

If you don't turn from this clanging world to listen  
you won't hear him.

Listen for the voice that calls you Beloved,  
the voice that calls you to love.

Listen to the voice that speaks of Creation's wholeness,  
that beckons you to completion.

A voice that leads you toward others,  
not your own rising above and away.

Listen to the song of the immense flowering within you,  
the risk and passion you can dance to.

You will hear it in stillness, not in frenzy,  
in silence, not in noise.

You will hear it from those who are belittled,  
not those who are honored by this besotted world.

The Beloved will not speak of success,  
but death and resurrection.

Listen for one who speaks with hope and delight,  
listen to him. Listen to him.