



“Transform: Silence, Solitude and Stillness”

Theme: Church Status - It's Complicated!

Sermon Scripture: Luke 5:16

Weekly Memory Verse: *“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”* Luke 5:16 (NIV)

***Special activity for the week:** Can you set aside a day this week to create a rule of life? You will be invited to begin this process starting Thursday, but you can adopt it to however it best works with your schedule. See if you can at least spend several hours in solitude on Saturday, reflecting back on your week and a rule of life.

Family Activity for the Week: Transformation cannot begin without time set aside for reflection. You might ask, “How can I do that with my family’s busy lifestyle?” By making it FUN! As a family, this week create a time capsule of 2020. It has been a weird year with many losses, but some surprising joys. What are some of those things that were unexpected? What did you dislike versus what brought you peace? Is there a memorable keepsake you can put in a box to remind you of this time? Here is a link that will give you sample questions, activities, and coloring pages to encourage your family towards reflection: <https://fun4tallykids.com/Whats-Happening/Stay-at-Home-Fun/FREE-PRINTABLE-My-Covid-19-2020-Time-Capsule/View-details> Ask yourself two questions, “What is one thing that stood out as important or crucial to our family during this time? and How can we continue to make that a focal point moving forward in our new normal?” In the Jesus Calling Devotional Sarah Young writes, “Let My thoughts burst freely upon your consciousness, stimulating abundant Life. *I am the Way and the Truth and the Life.* As you follow Me, I lead you along paths of newness: ways you have never imagined. Don’t worry about what is on the road up ahead. I want you to find security in knowing Me, the One who died to *set you free.*” Let the Holy Spirit wash over you this week as you seek the Lord’s face.

Monday, June 29 – Read Luke 5:1-16 in the NIV if you have one or can read it online. Notice the work Jesus did in vs. 1-11 and then again in vs 12-14.

- ▲ Why do you think the author put together vs 15 & 16?
- ▲ Perhaps journal what you might have written, expanding on these two verse to describe why you would have written them.
- ▲ Why was it important for Jesus to “often” withdraw to solitude?

Prayer: *Jesus, your life and teaching are inspiring and challenging. The many ways you cared for and healed others show us God’s love for everyone. Solitude is sometimes hard because _____. Please help me find time to get away this week. Amen.*

Tuesday, June 30 – Read Matthew 4:1-25. Henri Nouwen, the catholic priest and great Christian author once wrote, “We are not what we do, we are not what we have, we are not what others think of us. Coming home is claiming the truth. I am the beloved child of a loving creator.” Some theologians have noticed the connection between those three “false selves” that Nouwen writes about, and Jesus’ temptation in Matthew 4.

- ▲ In v. 4 the devil tempts Jesus with bread – basing a false self (our false identity) on what we have. How are you tempted to find your identity based on the things you have? Are they material things? Perhaps even the way you are generous or giving? Perhaps the way you seem to have the answers?
- ▲ In vs. 5-6 the devil tempts Jesus with what he can do, suggesting that God would command angels to rescue him. How are you tempted to find your identity in what you do? Is it your job? What you do for others? How much you give?
- ▲ In vs. 8-9 the devil tempts Jesus with fame. How are you tempted to find your identity based on the things other people think about you? Does what they say or think change who you are? Who are you most likely to be negatively influenced by?

Prayer: *Loving God, thank you that I am the beloved child of a loving creator. My identity is based upon what you think and say about me, not what I do, what I have, or what others think about me. Please show me the times when I base my identity on that which is not true. Amen.*

Wednesday, July 1 – Read Matthew 4:18-25 (yes, again!).

- ▲ While you read, imagine you are in the story, watching Peter, Andrew, then James and John fish. As you are watching Jesus invite them to follow him, what conversation do they have between themselves? What conversation does James and John have with their father?
- ▲ Look from the perspective of Zebedee, the father of James and John. What feelings does he have? What does he say to his sons as they say goodbye?
- ▲ Put yourself back in the shoes of the disciples. What things are going through your head as you walk away from a comfortable home environment and into an uncomfortable and uncertain future?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, remind me that you are with me every step of the way. Help me when I feel uncomfortable to notice the invitation toward growth. Help me when I feel uncertain, anxious, or stressed. May your peace comfort me, but also may your strength give me the courage to persevere. Amen.*

Thursday, July 2 – Read John 15. In this chapter Jesus shares about the importance of remaining connected to the Vine (God). We have been reading about the life and rhythms of Jesus as he heals, teaches, and then spend time in solitude, silence, and stillness. In her book *Sacred Rhythms*, Ruth Haley Barton teaches us that the “Christian tradition has a name for the structure that enables us to say yes to the process of spiritual transformation day in and day out. It is called a *rule of life*. A rule of life seeks to respond to two questions: Who do I want to be? How do I want to live?”

Can you find time today in solitude to begin to create a “rule of life,” a rhythm of spiritual practices, that will help you remain connected to God?

- ▲ What is a daily spiritual practice you can commit to?
- ▲ What are a couple of weekly practices that you value, and you know help form you?
- ▲ Is there a monthly practice such as a day of solitude, that you can commit to?
- ▲ Are there things you can do quarterly and yearly that will help you find balance and a sense of connection to God? (we will review this the next few days, so you don’t have to finish it all)
 - Think of ways you can include your partner or family in your rule of life.

Prayer: *Oh great vine, apart from you I feel a sense of lostness and loneliness. Our world is so busy, please help me to slow down, to disconnect from all the noise, and to reconnect with you. Amen.*

Friday, July 3 – Read Luke 22:39-53. Notice how Jesus, knowing his life of in danger, chose to find solitude and pray. Dallas Willard once wrote that “Hurry is the great enemy of the spiritual life in our day. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.” Do you picture Jesus in a hurry?

- ▲ When do you feel most hurried?
- ▲ What will it take for you to feel less hurried?
- ▲ Review your rule of life. Look over the daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly rhythms and practices. Are these feasible? What will you need to adjust in your life in order to make sure these happen? Do you need to save money, plan ahead, or perhaps let someone else know who will support you in this journey?

Prayer: *Jesus, you slipped away in prayer to connect to the vine during your darkest moment. Please help me find regular practices that help me feel continually connected to you. May silence, solitude, and stillness become my friend as it was yours. Amen.*

Saturday, July 4 – Read Romans 12:1-3. Paul tells us that spiritual formation is ongoing through the transformation of our minds. In other words, when we begin to think differently and see differently, we live differently. Spiritual practices help slowly work in us, from the inside out, to change the way we see.

We long to see our lives whole, to know that they matter. We wonder whether our many activities might ever come together in a way of life that is good for ourselves and others. Lacking a vision of a life-giving way of life, we turn from one task to another, doing as we well as we can but increasingly uncertain about what doing things well would look like. We yearn for a deeper understanding of how to order human life in accord with what is true and good.

~ Craig Dykstra & Dorothy Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*

- ▲ Can you find at least a few hours today or tomorrow in solitude and reflect upon your rule of life?
- ▲ Are there any specific activities that you are engaged in that might keep you from ordering your life in accord to what is true and good? Perhaps these activities are not bad, but may keep you from spending time in solitude, stillness, and silence.

Prayer: *Lord, may your unconditional love, beauty, and grace be revealed to me today. May I see your beauty in nature, may I sense your love in another, may I receive your grace with each breathe I take. Amen.*