Rooted: Solitude and Silence

Mark 6: 30-32

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**Beneath the surface** of every tree is a root system designed to **anchor** and **nourish** the tree.

* This root system is vital.
* **Unhealthy** roots result in an unhealthy tree.
* **Healthy** roots produce a vibrant and growing tree.

**Beneath the surface** of your life is a root system.

* You and I are anchored or nourished by our root system.
* **Unhealthy** roots mean an unhealthy life.
* **Healthy** roots, being rooted and established in Christ, produce a healthy and growing life.

For most us, what is **hidden** away is often left unattended.

* We tend to **ignore** what others don’t see.
* The result is that often our roots are **weak**
* Eventually this weak root system **shows up** in our lives.
	+ [**blow up** at work/school, **compromise** our integrity, **swept up** in some conspiracy theory]
	+ **“Your roots are showing…”**

The season of **Lent** is one of the church’s historic seasons to focus on the unseen, interior life—the roots.

So far this Lent, we have focused on **fasting**, two weeks ago, and **prayer** last Sunday.

Today, we have a new practice or discipline to try this week as we journey together toward Easter Sunday.

[Audio clip of train horns…30 seconds, then absolute silence]

Maybe you are not like me, but that sound clip is what it feels like in my brain when there is just too much noise!

**Silence. Solitude. This is a practice that strengthens our roots.**

Your life is inherently “noisy”

* Fascinating research on the impact of noise on our lives:
	+ Auditory issues
	+ But also elevated blood pressure, increased heart rate, increased stress, loss of sleep, digestive issues, even changes in brain chemistry.
	+ Various government and private agencies study these things and publish their reports…
* **Most of us** have figured out how to insulate ourselves from these kinds of damaging noises in our world.
* We have a **more challenging “noise”** in these days
* The kind of “noise” we invite into our lives through media and screens…

What’s the problem with all of this noise?

* [iPhone screen time] [also, TV, Videos, Movies, Music, News, Social Media, Gaming, Work]
* I’m not preaching against these things, I’m asking are they controlled.
* **Psychological effects** – addiction to reward seeking, self-image problems, reduced social skills, decline in vocabulary and critical thinking ability, your brain shrinks and becomes less effective
* **Physical effects**- eye strain, back and neck strain, sleep deprivation, weight gain, sitting is the new smoking
* **Relational effects**—reduces our ability to recognize social cues, isolates us through inattention and earbuds/headphones
* **Spiritual effects**—God is Spirit, speaks in whispers and nudges more than thunder and skywriting.
* **How will we hear God in all this noise?**

Jesus practiced silence/solitude regularly

* Mark 1: 12-13, Wilderness solitude inaugurates his ministry
* Mark 1:16, Walking by the sea when he sees and calls disciples
* Mark 1:35, Very early in the morning, dark, Jesus sought solitude, disciples interrupt with “Everyone is looking for you!”
* Mark 2:13, Once again by the lake…not alone for long, a crowd finds him
* Mark 3:7, Jesus withdrew again by the lake, again a crowd finds him
* Mark 4: 38, Jesus was down in the stern alone before calming the storm
* Mark 5:37, Jesus only takes PJJ with him. When he heals the synagogue ruler’s daughter, he puts everyone out of the room
* Mark 6: 30-32,(on screen) Jesus calls his followers to solitude and silence

* Jesus seems to always be trying to find solitude and silence
* The other gospel writers agree:
	+ Before choosing the 12, a night in prayer in Luke 6
	+ After hearing about J the B death, withdrew in Matt. 14
	+ Luke 5 has Jesus withdrawing to pray after healing a leper
* **Trinity/Incarnation**: Jesus’ nearness to the Father is not destroyed by the incarnation, but the natural oneness (perichoresis) of the Trinity now must be practiced in order to continue.
	+ **Jesus has to make space to commune with the Father**

**If Jesus practiced solitude and silence and we know we need it, why do we resist?**

Why do we resist it?

* **Too easy** to avoid it
	+ Solitude and silence are against the grain of our culture
* Sometimes, **too hard** to experience it
	+ We are addicted to our noise [people in line, in cars, in restaurants, in meetings, in church]
	+ When we find silence and solitude, we are faced with our reality.
* Silence and solitude are the **diet and exercise** of the spiritual life
* **Essential but easily avoided**
* **Personality** reveals that some of us are given to silence,
	+ Others maybe not,
	+ **But for all, silence in this day and age is essential spiritual work.**
	+ **Without it, we will not hear God.**

Silence/solitude are essential to healthy roots

* Provides the time for **thoughts** to be well thought
* Makes space to **breathe** deeply and **imagine**
* Importantly, we cannot **pray** well without solitude and silence
	+ Like **yeast**, truth must be “worked into” us, given time to season, and then the growth happens.
* We live in the **age of immediacy**. You can have it all now and as a result you are convinced that you should.

[Fast food or **drive by devotion** is our tendency]

* + We need to remember **Jesus’ metaphors of seeds, yeast, wine.**
	+ All of these metaphors take time
* We need regular periods of “**absorption**” to **“soak up”** the things of God
* It’s the difference between keeping these experiences in our **heads** and finding them worked into our **hearts**.
* When we avoid solitude and silence, we train ourselves to crave the **“junk food”** of learning…sound bites, flashy images, easy answers.
* **Unfortunately, life simply doesn’t work this way.**

How can you discover the value of silence/solitude?

* [Aprons, Closets, Ear Buds, Early Mornings, Late Evenings, Nature Walks]
* Re-acquaint yourself with the **on/off switch** of your devices
* **Memorize** scripture which gives your twitchy brain something to do while you soak up truth
* **Announce** your desire for silence/solitude to family/roommates and ask for support
* **Couple it** with fasting and leverage the mealtime to steal away

What develops is a practiced **“inner solitude”** that even when you are surrounded by noise, there is peace in the soul.

Jesus had this

Believers throughout history had this

We can learn it, too

**Want to try this week?**

When you see this image (Silence Picture), like/share/comment with numbers…

1. Early or Late Solitude?
2. Fasting and Leveraging the Time?
3. Walking Solitude?
4. Aprons and Blankets?
5. Family/Friend Support?
6. No Phone Zone?

Prayer

Song: The Blessing

Benediction:

Song: The Blessing