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From Solitude to Community to Ministry

Jesus established the true sequence for spiritual work.

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SOLITUDE

Solitude is being with God and God alone. Is there any space for that in your life?

Why is it so important that you are with God and God alone on the mountain top? It's important because it's the place in which you can listen to the voice of the One who calls you the beloved. To pray is to listen to the One who calls you "my beloved daughter," "my beloved son," "my beloved child." To pray is to let that voice speak to the center of your being, to your guts, and let that voice resound in your whole being.



Who am I? I am the beloved. That's the voice Jesus heard when he came out of the Jordan River: "You are my beloved; on you my favor rests." And Jesus says to you and to me that we are loved as he is loved. That same voice is there for you. When you are not claiming that voice, you cannot walk freely in this world.

Jesus listened to that voice all the time, and he was able to walk right through life. People were applauding him, laughing at him; praising him and rejecting him; calling "Hosanna!" and calling "Crucify!" But in the midst of that, Jesus knew one thing--I am the beloved; I am God's favorite one. He clung to that voice.

If we create space in which God can act and speak, something surprising will happen.

There are many other voices speaking--loudly: "Prove that you are the beloved." "Prove you're worth something." "Prove you have any contribution to make." "Do something relevant." "Be sure you make a name for yourself." "At least have some power--then people will love you; then people will say you're wonderful, you're great."

These voices are so strong in this world. These were the voices Jesus heard right after he heard "You are my beloved." Another voice said, "Prove you are the beloved. Do something. Change these stones into bread. Be sure you're famous. Jump from the temple, and you will be known. Grab some power so you have real influence. Don't you want some influence? Isn't that why you came?"

Jesus said, "No, I don't have to prove anything. I am already the beloved."

Oh, if we could sit for just one half hour a day doing nothing except taking a simple word from the gospel and putting it in front of us--say, "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want." Say it three times, and we know it's not true, because we want many things. That's exactly why we're so nervous. But if we keep saying the truth, the real truth--"The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want"--and let that truth descend from our mind into our heart, gradually those words are written on the walls of our inner holy place. That becomes the space in which we can receive our colleagues and our work, our family and our friends, and the people whom we will meet during the day.

The trouble is, as soon as you sit and become quiet, you think, Oh, I forgot this. I should call my friend. Later on I'm going to see him. Your inner life is like a banana tree filled with monkeys jumping up and down.

It's not easy to sit and trust that in solitude God will speak to you--not as a magical voice but that he will let you know something gradually over the years. And in that word from God you will find the inner place from which to live your life.

Solitude is where spiritual ministry begins. That's where Jesus listened to God. That's where we listen to God.