

April 15, 2020



...a Quiet Life

"We urge you, brothers and sisters... to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life."

-1 Thessalonians 4:10-11

A quiet life, you say? Its been too quiet, if you ask me. When the Shelter in Place order began, I joked that this was this introvert's dream come true. Now even I am saying, "Enough already!" I can't imagine what some of you social butterflies are saying and feeling! I felt so led to spend Lent focusing on slowing down. I preached it, I recommended a radical book on it, I wrote six - now seven devotionals on it. In mid-January, when I was making this plan, I had no idea where our world circumstance was going to take us. At times during the last six weeks I felt like I was rubbing salt in the wound when we really had no choice.

It occurs to me now that living a quiet life is more than just sheltering in place. It is possible to be socially distant, leaving your home only to get some fresh air or run to the store, prohibited to be with family, to go to your job, to have visitors, to go to church – to have time to burn - and still not be living a quiet life.

Go back in your mind to the passage I preached on way back in January: Matt. 11:28-30. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." We can be living in quiet solitude, but still be stressed

and torn up on the inside – not resting within at all.

I want to leave you with one last challenge as we wrap up this series on slowing down. How would your experience in these stressful days be different if you made it your goal to not miss the goodness of each day, and to bring your best self to it? I have to say, I have spent some days with a bad attitude as my freedom has been limited and no end is in sight.

We have all experienced loss in some form or fashion over these last two months. We can be rueful and pout about it, or we can claim the rest and the easy yoke that Jesus offers and begin to live our best life, pandemic or no pandemic. John Mark Comer, in *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, identified four practices that can reorient our disoriented lives. We have spent time learning about and learning from each one: 1)Silence and solitude, 2)Sabbath, 3)Simplicity, and 4)Slowing. Our goal, he says, is simple. Slow down. Simplify your life around the practices of Jesus. Live from a center of abiding. The four practices are not the goal – they are the means to the goal of abiding. That is the easy yoke. That is the rest for your souls that you long for, that you need whether your life is full and blustering with activity, or you are whiling away the days and hours wondering when life will return to normal.

The key is to keep practicing – doing these spiritual disciplines. It is not about perfection. You will try and fail and try again. Use this little saying when you start to slip into old patterns: Slow down. Breathe. Come back to the moment. Receive the good as gift. Accept the hard as a pathway to peace. Abide. Say it over and over until it sticks. Times are hard.

And never forget this: ***You are a child of God, one in whom God delights and dwells, and you are living in the unshakeable Kingdom of God!***