

30<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Hello all! I've been thinking a bit about the theology of isolation (I know but it sounds a lot grander than it actually is). That is to say, I've been considering what things come to mind when I think about how scripture addresses the subject.

We've all been quite well isolated for some nine or ten weeks now, some more than others as they face up to being isolated alone at home. When I was thinking about what thoughts I might offer on the matter, the obvious place to start was the Bible. In the scriptures there are several examples of people dealing with isolation of some kind.

In the Old Testament the first one that springs to mind, at least for me, is Jonah. Isolated in the belly of a large fish for three days. I suppose Jonah wondered what was to become of him once he got over the shock of being swallowed alive and three days churning about inside a fish must have seemed like an eternity to him. He had time to consider his life, the call he had from God to go to Nineveh and his vain attempt to escape God. Eventually the fish spewed him out onto the beach not far from the very place he'd been trying to escape and so he ended up doing as God had asked him. He preached repentance to the people of Nineveh and they heeded God (much to Jonah's annoyance). I suppose he would have rather seen them punished. So the story of Jonah teaches us some interesting things.

1. You cannot escape God (however hard you try, however far you run).
2. A few days away from the rest of the world (even inside a large fish) can give you a new perspective.
3. Doing the will of God isn't always going to make you happy (if God chooses to do something you don't like!).

In the New Testament, at least for me, the first and most obvious example of isolation is Jesus. Jesus is always going off somewhere quiet to pray, often not telling anyone where he was going. These periods of isolation are not imposed from outside (as ours have been) but are self imposed. Jesus separates himself from others to do something that is important to him, to pray and spend time in the presence of God. This theme marked the beginning of Jesus ministry (40 days in the wilderness) and continued throughout his time with the disciples. Jesus sees these periods of 'alone time' as vital to his relationship with the Father, he wants to be alone with God in order that he may be better 'tuned in' to His will.

These are just a couple of thoughts really, to get you thinking about where God may be in your isolation or 'wilderness' experience and they are by no means extensive or deeply thought through. I simply offer them as a starting point for you to do some theological reflection for yourselves, homework, if you will!

I hope this gives you something ponder and pray over in the next few days, have fun!

Attachments for this Sunday PENTECOST.

And finally, not the right way to keep fit!...The only exercise some people get is jumping to the wrong conclusions,  
running down other people, sidestepping responsibility and  
pushing their luck!

Tom.

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