

DESERTED PLACES

Luke 9:7-17

Spiritually speaking, a “Deserted place” is a place where all human resources, *physically, materially, philosophically, and financially*, are abandoned; it’s a place where total reliance upon God is essential to the outcome of our situation. This message is important because it reminds us that deserted places, *times when we may feel deserted by God*, are *opportunities* for a greater manifestation of God’s glory!

(v.7-9) Herod the tetrarch (Roman governor) is perplexed (convicted) by the ministry of Jesus; because he had beheaded John the Baptist! In the same sense today, *despite world-wide persecution of the church*, the Kingdom of God continues to thrive. According to Open Doors (a ministry to the persecuted church), 215 million Christians experience high levels of persecution worldwide - that represents 1 in 12 Christians worldwide. (Open Doors)

It would appear the church is losing! But that’s “fake news!” An article dated April 23, 2017, entitled, “In China, Unregistered Churches Are Driving A Religious Revolution” - “*China the world’s rising superpower is experiencing an explosion of faith. The decades of anti-religious campaigns that followed the 1949 communist takeover are giving way to a spiritual transformation - and among the fastest-growing drivers of that transformation are unregistered churches.*” (The Atlantic International)

Revival has broken out in China! Like Herod, the world, *through persecution*, has cut off the head of the church, but they are defenseless against the root the church, **JESUS!** Don't listen to the demonic hype! Here's the real news! (Isaiah 43:13) **Indeed before the day was, I am He; And there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?** In fact, I read recently where members of the MS13 gang are coming to Christ by the hundreds! (INSIGHT CRIME Feb.8, 2017; Christianity Today May 2018). (Matthew 16:18) **And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**

The disciples return excited, verifying this very fact, and testifying to the power of God! (v.10, 11) **BETHSAIDA: (house of fishing)** was situated three kilometers (two miles) north of the Sea of Galilee, east of the Jordan River. The Lord's response here is interesting; rather than place them on a pedestal, ***He takes them aside privately, into a deserted place.*** *God's private lessons are never conducted on the stage of human self-sufficiency, but in deserted places, where there's none to be found but God!*

I believe Jesus took them aside because He knew they were in *danger* of taking credit for the works of God! (read: v.10a). **Lesson: After experiencing *victory* in our lives it's good to meet with Jesus in a "deserted place."** To come aside with the Lord and regain proper spiritual focus, lest we fall into the *error* of the devil - *taking God's glory upon ourselves!* (Isaiah 14) - A common mistake amongst those who are novice in the ministry (1 Timothy 3:6).

(read: v. 11, 12). In Mark's account (Mark 6:34), Jesus had compassion on them for, "They were like sheep not having a shepherd." **Notice** when God's lessons take place: at the point of exhaustion (it had been a long day), when facing overwhelming odds, and in a deserted place - *where human reasoning fails!* There, Jesus rings the school bell; *class is in session*, God is going to teach you something!

Oftentimes we fail to learn the lessons God desires to teach us because, like the disciples, we are quick to *send people away* or run away from the situation! Now, as with the disciples, many within the church have experienced the *power* and *authority* of Christ; yet because of exhaustion, or overwhelming circumstances, we fail to apply what we know to the situation now facing us! *We fail to remember: If He was God yesterday, He's still God today!* (Hebrews 13:8) **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.**

(v. 13-15) Jesus rocks their world, saying to them, "**You give them something to eat!**" "No, that's the pastor's job!" *God's word is not limited to an office, or the lack of our ability to comprehend the impossible!* To the human mind, what Jesus asked them to do was completely ludicrous! "*We have five loaves and two fish...*" but there are well over 5,000 people present! (v. 14a). But Jesus is trying to *teach* them **that** God is greater than our limitations; and **God uses the ordinary to accomplish the extraordinary.**

Thus, He often places us in uncomfortable situations to remind us, *“It’s not by might nor by power but by His Spirit!”* (Zechariah 4:6). Also, that *“The just shall live by faith.”* (Hebrews 10:38). Thus, **Faith is a constant call to the “uncomfortable,” that we might experience the “impossible!”** It’s often out of deserted places that God requires from us an “offering,” *an act of obedience*, as a demonstration of our *trust* in Him! It may be a kind response to an offense, or some other act of *humble obedience*.

Remember the widow who gave “two mites” into the temple offering (treasury) in Mark 12 (*a mite is worth about one-fifth of a cent*); Jesus said that she gave more than anyone. (Mark 12:44) **“...for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”** Obedience *from a deserted place (spiritually or physically)* is the pathway to true eternal riches and glory!

Another lesson: We cannot be a conduit of God’s *benevolent love* without being a recipient of that which comes *from Him!* **We cannot distribute what we have not received.** (v.16). Spiritually speaking, God’s word is *that which Christ has blessed*, like the fish and the loaves; and if we are faithful to “distribute” (proclaim) His word, souls will be satisfied. **“...they all ate and were filled (satisfied)...”** (v.17a) (Psalm 107:9) **For He satisfies the longing soul, And fills the hungry soul with goodness.**

APPLICATION: In the deserted places there is *always* more there than meets the eye! In (v.14) *Jesus had them sit down in groups of fifty*. **Fifty:** is the Hebrew number for **Jubilee** (*blowing of the trumpet*) - proclamation of the “Year of Jubilee” (Leviticus 25:8-55). In Hebrew culture the 50th year was **Jubilee**; after seven cycles of seven years (49), property was restored to original owners - slaves were released from their debt - no sowing or reaping was performed in that year - it was a time of rest! Jesus is declaring **“HE IS OUR JUBILEE!”** The “*Twelve full baskets left over!*” speak to the fact, God is able to do above and beyond what we could ask, or even think!

In Luke 10 Jesus also sends out seventy of His followers; they, *like the disciples*, returned excited, rejoicing over the success of their ministry! (ttt) **Luke 10:17-20**. **COMMUNION:** communion reminds us of what’s really important - that **our** names are written in heaven!