

Occasional Update #21

30 January 2024

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told Him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. (Mark 6:30-32)

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Dry Seasons & Spiritual Climate Change

All of us go through 'seasons' in life – physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. These, of course, are often because of our (increasing!) age, and many of them may be influenced by things that are largely beyond our control.

Whether we like it or not, these changes or 'seasons' in life may seem to be too difficult for us to handle. Things may seem to be dull, boring, routine, empty. Sometimes we need to "take a break" – come away to a quiet place, and rest awhile.

One of these situations may be "dry seasons" (in the natural, perhaps like our summer climate!) Other situations may be tiredness or exhaustion from our constant busyness. The verses above from Mark's Gospel, describe one such occurrence which Jesus' disciples faced. The quote from Matthew is one of the things Jesus said about this to His disciples – and still says to us!

On one occasion Jesus went into the wilderness, where He fasted and prayed for 40 days. In fact, 6 times in the Gospels it says of Jesus that He "withdrew" from various situations.

The first three verses of David's '23rd Psalm' say:

"The LORD is my shepherd, *I shall not want*. He makes me *lie down in green pastures*; He leads me beside *still waters*; **He restores my soul**"

As for **Climate Change** ... many people are very concerned about, and may be frightened of, possible climate changes and their effects on them. In the natural, the climate is always changing, and is different from place to place, and time to time. That's why we have frequent weather forecasts, etc. Spiritually, we also go through seasons that may trouble us now, and worry about our future.

- We sometimes face the hot, dry, **Summer** seasons, but may be able to relax and even overcome burnout from the past.
- Then the **Autumn** seasons, where the sun goes down earlier and earlier, and the darkness sets in for longer and longer each day.
- We all, at times, face dark clouds, storms; and tough, miserable, **Winter** times. These are normal, and *not* necessarily because of sin!
- **But** there are also **Spring** times when we find – New life after winter passes. Growth. Renewal. Hope for the future. Things are improving and we can face each day more easily.

Our faith may be tested. Our hope may be low. But God is still with us!

What can we do when we face "dry seasons", or times when we feel we are going through a spiritual "winter", and long for "spring"?

Pray for, and pray about, the encouragement God gives us in the Bible.

For example, read: Deuteronomy 31:6, 8. Joshua 1:5. 1 Chronicles 28:20. Plus the Scriptures below.

Isaiah 43:18-19 Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

The book of Psalms has many psalms that we can identify with, as we go through different seasons and times in our lives. King David wrote about half of the Psalms, and often expressed what he was going through: his troubles, questions, and feelings. The following Psalms are words of encouragement for times like these.

Psalm 139 God knows all about us (v. 1-6). God is always with us (v. 7-12). God created us (v. 13-18). God knows our thoughts and feelings (v. 19-24). So ... "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Psalm 23 Read through this Psalm, phrase-by-phrase. Meditate and pray over what they say – especially for their applications to your situation – these words are for *me!* [*These words are as true for us today, as they always have been over the 3,000 years since David wrote them*]

Psalm 37:25 I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

(Further relevant Psalms are listed below)

There are times and seasons; the climate does change; there are Winters and Springs – spiritually as well as physically. There are times when we need to ask other people (especially Christians) to help us through these difficult times.

But God is with us always – He knows all things, including the future – and He cares for us, even though at times we may have to say, "**Lord, I don't understand, but I trust You.**" **Don't give up!**

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. [His peace] So they shall put My name on the Israelites [God's people], and I will bless them. Numbers 6:24-27

Some Psalms and their themes

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| 47 | God's rule over the nations. | 84 | The joy of worship. |
| 31 | Battles. | 85 | Restoration of God's favour. |
| 23 | The Lord is my Shepherd. | 145 | God's greatness and goodness. |
| 27 | Confidence in the Lord. | 100 | Praise the Lord! |
| 37 | Trust in the Lord. | 149 | Praise for God's goodness. |
| 46 | God's protection. | 150 | Praise for God's greatness. |
| 91 | God's protection. | 107 | Thanks for God's help in difficult times. |
| 121 | God's protection. | 37, 84, 91, 101 | Walking with the Lord. |
| 139 | God watches over me. | | |

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