

# ***“Make and Take Time for Solitude with God”***

## ***St. Mark 1.35***

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany 2006

The Word of God for our sermon meditation is recorded in the Gospel of St. Mark, the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter, this 35<sup>th</sup> verse “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, [Jesus] went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.”

In recent years the movie industry has been looking for ways to pump up their bottom line. As they explore remaking old movies as well as those filled with controversy for their content and agenda, the movie industry realized that there was a segment of the population that they still were not reaching – those who grew up with comic book heroes.

Just in the past two decades we have seen a number of movies featuring some favorites like Spiderman, the Hulk, X-Men, the Batman, the Fantastic Four and more. Now some have been more successful than others as indicated by the number of sequels but it has turned out to be a good bet for a studio. One superhero who is also being revived, as it were, this year is Superman.

The reason I bring this up is not to walk down memory lane for some or to create new interest on the part of others. I bring this up because these films caused me to remember how every superhero has their place of retreat or, as in the case of Superman, his Fortress of Solitude. Whether it is the Bat Cave or the Fortress of Solitude, there the superhero could escape the world which he defended, reconnect with his past, and be refreshed and renewed for the inevitable labors that awaited him beyond its walls and seclusion.

Why would superheroes or heroines, for that matter, need such time? Doesn't being super preclude the need for seclusion, refreshment, renewal, and solitude? Apparently not for though they developed or possessed incredible abilities and powers, they still remained human having very human needs. It is a fact of life – men and women need some down time for their bodies and their spirits to be refreshed, some time of solitude from the world around.

We see, incredibly enough, that the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and the Son of God in the flesh required the same. Our sermon reading for today reveals this most interesting aspect to our Lord's saving life and ministry. He went off for some solitude with His Father and there prayed to Him. Doesn't that strike you as odd? Why would Jesus, God in the flesh, the Almighty, Omnipotent Lord of the universe, need to make and take time for solitude with God?

In fact, we find that at very important junctures in His Public Ministry such as selecting the Twelve, expanding His preaching venues, and His impending sufferings and death, that Jesus retreated many times to converse with His heavenly Father and to be strengthened for the labors that awaited Him. But why does Jesus need to do this? He does this, not only to set an example but to save us and rescue us from our sin so that we in gratitude and thanksgiving learn to make and take time for solitude with God.

For the Bible does teach quite plainly that we as God's people are to make and take time for solitude with God on a weekly, in fact, daily basis. This was the original purpose of the Sabbath and for Sunday worship. This is why God's churches through the ages offered worship, Sunday School, and Bible study at regular, designated times through the week, months, and year. God's People, His Church has always understood that we need time set apart during the day, during the week for quiet time with God's Word and for prayer for, quite honestly, sometimes the only time with God that some people make and take is the worship hour.

We have always known the truth that we are to gather together on a regular basis for worship weekly and have daily devotions primarily because God teaches this in His Word, especially in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment where we are instructed to hold God's Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it. Luther taught the same in his Small Catechism under the Daily Prayers section when he wrote "How the head of the family should teach his household to pray morning and evening."

God has instructed us to do this, Jesus Himself engages in this wholesome and Law-fulfilling practice because it is commanded us for our own good for, otherwise, we would drift away from God

and wear ourselves out spiritually and physically. We are to make and take time for solitude with God weekly here in His house, daily in our own homes, so that we fulfill God's will for us and receive the benefits granted us in the hearing of His Word and praying to our Lord.

Surely we can see this from our own hectic lifestyles and routines. Is there any of us that goes through the week 100% refreshed and ready to take on the day each and every day? Is there any of us who doesn't struggle and slough through our weekly routines and need a break, a time of solitude with God so that we might hear Him speak His promises to us and be strengthened by His Word? Is there any one of us who cannot use some to talk to who will hear us and all our words, whether our soul's complaint or our spirit's praises?

Yet, knowing our need for solitude with our Heavenly Father, do we actually set aside the time, make the time no matter what, no matter how super we might be as a Lutheran Christian? Even more, despite our own lives of weariness and weakness, do we set aside this time knowing that God commands that we do so, since we know that we need to be fed with His Word and Sacrament, since our bodies and minds need the rest and renewal?

Like many other areas of our lives, though we know that we are to do it, that we should be doing it, we are not very good at making and taking the time for solitude with our God. For some of us it is just plain laziness and a lack of discipline. For others we lay the blame on our schedules, daily routines, and the pressing demands of marriage, family, and career.

But there is no excuse for, in the end, the reason why we do not daily spend time with God's Word and in prayer at home, the reason why we do not worship every week and, I might add, attend Sunday School and Bible Class as well, is one and one reason only. It is because we are sinners who cannot keep and fulfill the whole will and Law of God perfectly in our lives. Even the most devoted can identify times when the demands of the day, the pressing deadline of a project, and the stresses of everyday life have left the Word of God unread and unheard and prayers unspoken.

Yet God has spoken His piece on such sin, has He not? Sin requires satisfaction. Sin demands judgment. Sin must be expiated, paid for, atoned for. Sin cannot just be swept under the proverbial rug. So Jesus Christ, the Son of God Incarnate came into our world fulfilling the whole will and Law of God for you and me to make satisfaction for our sins, to serve the judgment we were to receive, and to pay for our sins giving us the promise of rest eternal in heaven.

For the Lord Jesus just does not go off and meditate on His Father's words and pray to Him as an example for you and me. No, Jesus chiefly does this and the Spirit has St. Mark record this event in our Lord Jesus' like to reveal that Jesus is our Sin-Substitute, our Mediator, the Sacrifice for our sins. For without Jesus we could have no rest from our sin, no refreshment with God whatsoever, no strength and renewal for our lives with the Lord of all.

But in Jesus we have been given rest from our sins, even for the sins of not making and taking time for solitude with God in Word and prayer. For Jesus came into this world and took our place before the anger and wrath-filled judgment seat of God. Jesus came and kept the entire Law and commands of God on our behalf and was abandoned by the Heavenly Father Himself so that you and I would never have to spend a moment in the fires of Hell. He suffered and died on Calvary's cross utterly alone so that we would never be separated eternally from God on high.

Through faith in Jesus this is our confidence and assurance for, washed in His holy blood, clothed in His righteousness, we have been pardoned and forgiven all our sins. We have rest now from our sins for He has removed our guilt and He has refreshed us with the announcement that we have had all our sins taken from us and cast away never to be seen and heard from again. We also have the promise of that rest that never ends, of a communion and a conversation with God for all eternity, one that will remain unbroken and uninterrupted in heaven's glory.

It is in His Word, in the pages of Sacred Scripture that you and I hear of these glorious and blessed truths of our salvation and of eternal life with God. It is in His Word as you read and hear it in

your home devotions that you will learn and relearn how God has loved you in Jesus Christ who suffered, died, and rose again to give you rest now and forever. It is in His Word that we learn that God cares for us each and every day and has promised to give us strength to meet the demands of these lives that we live, renewing our strength.

It is in that Word that we hear and read in our home devotions, in our weekly worship, in our weekly Sunday School and Bible studies, that God comes to us, speaks to us, and reminds us that He is our God and we are the sheep of His pasture. Think about that – the Almighty God of heaven and earth actually is talking to you and me in the words of the Bible no matter where that Word is read and heard. Can one give a reason then why we should not be in that Word and respond to that Word in prayer? May God grant that we, as His people, as those having rest from our sins now, renewal in our lives now, and the assurance of eternal conversation with God in heaven, that we make and take time for solitude with God. Amen.

**+Soli Deo Gloria+**