

Meditation

How's everyone doing today?

**Perhaps it has been a difficult week for you,
with all the troubles in the news...**

Perhaps you noticed that our reading today starts with the phrase

“When Jesus was praying alone”

Jesus was no stranger to suffering.

He lived in a time of great violence and great suffering.

His people were oppressed,

they were under the dominance of foreign power,

they were so heavily taxed they barely had enough to eat...

Life was not easy for Jesus or his people...

Illness and sickness were rampant,

and if we feel out of control these days...

**well, it doesn't even compare to the powerless of the people
back in ancient Israel.**

**Perhaps that is why in the Gospel of Luke, that Jesus so often goes
off by himself to pray.**

He too needed to recharge, to step back, to rest and renew himself.

he too needed to disconnect from everyone else's struggles

and find a place to nourish and refresh himself,

**to replenish himself so that he could reenter life with the physical, emotional
and spiritual energy he would need.**

**Sometimes I have thought that because I grew up with the understanding
that he was THE Son of God...he didn't have human feelings like we do...
or he didn't get tired or discouraged like we do...**

**These days, I have a more human understanding of Jesus these days...
a totally human person
who, like us, got tired, discouraged and angry.**

**Yet, because of his intimate and powerful relationship with God,
because he continually nourished that relationship with prayer...
because he took time to step back and away,**

**He could continue to reach out to the suffering,
he could continue to teach and preach and heal and feed...**

**So, that's what I would like to do with you today...
today, I'd like to offer a bit of a respite from the struggles,
the sorrows, the anger that we are subjected to from the world around us.**

**And perhaps it is not just the difficulties of other peoples' lives
that is weighing us down...
Perhaps you are dealing with your own suffering or some one close to you who is
suffering...**

**What I would like to do today is to invite you to allow a short guided meditation
to offer you some peace...**

**I'd like to ring the bell....
and then guide you into a place of safety and a place of quiet...
A place where you might find peace and a renewed heart, mind and soul...**

Are you willing?

Let us begin:

Let us start with taking a long deep breath counting to 4, holding it for 2 and then releasing it to the count of 7...

Now, if you are comfortable...close your eyes...

Imagine in your mind's eye a place that you love to go...

perhaps you have been there,

perhaps not....

Perhaps it is a place in the woods or in the mountains,

a sandy beach, by a lake or by an ocean...

choose your sacred place...and then either sit or lay down...

In your sacred place you are safe. No one can enter without your permission...

First thing that you notice in your sacred place:

is the air around you...is it moist? salty? crisp? warm, cool?

Feel the air on your cheek...

is the sun shining? If so can you feel it?

If not, can you feel its absence?

What does the earth feel like under your feet? Is it soft or hard? sandy or rocky?

Is it grassy? is the soil moist and soft?

What do you smell?

What do you hear? Do you birds? waves? frogs? your own heartbeat?

In your imagination, in your safe, sacred place look around you...what do you see?

Do you see trees? water? sand? meadow flowers? blue ocean? look all around you...and take everything in...

Now...bring your awareness back to your breath...

breathe in to the count of 4...hold for 2, breathe out to the count of 7...

Now become aware of your own inner soul...

that place of holiness that resides in every part of creation...

Inside your sacred soul, there is the presence of God...that great mystery of the cosmos...

in your sacred soul, there is peace, deep contentment and safety...

can you go there? can you visit it in your imagination?

what does that feel like to you? what is the color of it?

Can you breathe deeper?

Can you enter it more deeply?....

Now, can you let all thoughts go and simply be inside your sacred space, your soul...

you and the Holy One....

can you feel the love and the loveliness that holds you?

If any thoughts of unworthy ness or ugliness enter your mind...

just see them, and then return to your soul...

These thoughts are simply visitors... they are not you...

they are like clouds passing through the clear blue sky of your awareness....

They come and they go....they do not have to stay....

Stay here in your sacred soul, in your sacred place for two more breaths...

breathing in to the count of 4, holding for the count of 2, releasing to the count of 7.

And when you ready, you can open your eyes...

When Jesus went to a place alone to pray, did he say prayers?

Perhaps....

But Jesus also had an intimate and personal relationship with the Lord God of the

Universe...whom he called Abba Daddy....

**You don't develop this relationship by thinking about it,
but by being in it, with it...**

this is the true meaning of prayer...

Prayer is developing our relationship with that Mystery we call God...

Jesus knew his God very well

**it is was this relationship that gave him the courage and the strength,
the wisdom, the gentleness, the freedom, and the power to deal with the pain, the struggles
and the suffering of his day...**

We too are invited into this kind of relationship with the Holy...

When we take the time to nourish this kind of prayer, this kind of relationship

We too will find the courage and the strength,

**the wisdom, the gentleness, the freedom and the power to deal with the pain, the struggles
and the suffering of our day...**

Taking the time to pull back, 'retreat'....be alone with ourselves, go within...

is not escapism....it is the most necessary and vital

thing we can do to nourish our relationship with God...

and thus the most necessary and vital thing we can do for ourselves and the world....

and when we trust that this indeed is true

then the only next thing we can say is: 'thank you' amen....