

May 6th, 2018

Scripture:

Psalm 37:5-9

Psalm 46

Philippians 4:4-9

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him --- do not fret.”

Waiting.

Waiting patiently.

Being still.

Being still and waiting.

Being still and waiting patiently.

These are very difficult things for many people --- most people perhaps even.

Stillness.

In an age where business seems to be so highly valued --- what about stillness?

Some thoughts.

First Thomas Merton ---- 20th century Trappist Monk --- he said --- “If we twist our lives out of shape in order to fill every corner of them with action and experience ---- God will silently withdraw from our heart and leave us empty.”

“If we twist our lives out of shape in order to fill every corner of them with action and experience ---- God will silently withdraw from our heart and leave us empty.”

And then there is Herman Melville --- from his classic book Moby Dick --- “To insure the greatest efficiency in the dart ---- the harpooners of this world must start to their feet from out of idleness --- and not from toil.”

“To insure the greatest efficiency in the dart ---- the harpooners of this world must start to their feet from out of idleness --- and not from toil.”

The importance of stillness.

And then there is Beethoven ---- his 5th symphony starts with a rest ----- not a note but a rest.

Go look up the sheet music for Beethoven’s 5th symphony ---- the first note isn’t a note at all --- it’s a rest --- the symphony starts with stillness --- silence.

It’s the silences that make the symphonies.

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Bob Dylan --- recent winner of the Nobel Prize for literature wrote this on the inside of the jacket notes from the album --- Bringing it all back Home in 1965 ---- “Experience teaches that silence terrifies people the most.”

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Stillness --- and the silence that often accompanies it ---- terrifies some people --- we’ve all likely met at least one person who just can’t stand silence --- and feels the need to fill every second with chatter.

“Experience teaches that silence terrifies people the most.”

And then Plutarch --- Greek philosopher ----- writing in the first century --- “Silence at the proper season is wisdom ----- and better than speech.”

“Silence at the proper season is wisdom ----- and better than speech.”

And there are many many more --- a few other good ones ----- “The body benefits from movement ----- the mind benefits from stillness.”

“Faith is the ability to honour stillness.”

And then Meister Eckhart 13 century German theologian and mystic --- said
 ----- “Nothing in all creation is so like God as stillness.”

“Nothing in all creation is so like God as stillness.”

And we haven’t even gotten to the Bible yet.

And we haven’t even stopped to be still yet.

And we haven’t even sat in silence yet.

So far --- all I’ve done here ---- is peak of stillness and of silence.

Now let’s take a moment to actually be still --- and be silent.

Psalm 46 --- verse 10 ----- “Be still ----- and know that I am God.”

Be still.

And know that I am God.

Stillness is difficult.

Stillness is a challenge.

Stillness isn’t all that valued in our society.

Stillness takes work.

Stillness takes time.

And now ---- the Bible on stillness.

“Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46 verse 10.

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.” --- Psalm 37 verse 7.

“The Lord will fight for you --- you need only to be still.” ---- Exodus 14:14.

“The Lord is in his holy temple ---- let all the earth be silent before him.” --- Habakkuk 2:20.

“In repentance and rest is your salvation
in quietness and trust is your strength.” ---- Isaiah 30:15.

And in Mark 4 when the disciples are out on the boat in a storm Jesus stands up in the boat and says to the waves --- “Quiet! Be still!”

“Quiet! Be Still!”

Not stop but --- “Quiet! ---- not stop but ----- “Be still”

“Quiet! Be still!”

And one last one --- there are many many more verse in scripture pertaining to stillness and silence ---- but one more for today.

Psalm 107 verse 29 --- “He stilled the storm to a whisper;
the waves of the sea were hushed.”

“He stilled the storm to a whisper;
the waves of the sea were hushed.” --- similar to the “Quiet! ----- Be Still!”
of Jesus stilling the storm in Mark 4.

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him --- do not fret.”

The title of this sermon is --- “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him --- do not fret.”

From our cal to worship this morning Psalm 37 --- verse 7.

There are 3 things in this tiny little part of a verse.

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him --- do not fret.” -----
isn't the whole verse --- it's not even half of the verse --- it's about one third
of one verse.

And not only this but there are 3 things held up before us in this one third of one verse.

1. Be still
2. Wait
3. Don't fret.

1. Be still before the Lord
2. Wait patiently for Him
and then
3. Don't fret

I don't know about you but I'm lucky if I can just do the first one.

Be still.

Be still before the Lord.

Be still --- and know that I am God.

But you know what --- if we do the first one -----

Be still.

The next 2 fall into place automatically.

1. Be still
2. Wait
3. Don't fret.

If we still ourselves in the presence of God ----- suddenly we find ourselves also waiting on Him ----- and then as we wait on Him we suddenly realize that we are also totally free from worry --- from fretting.

Be still before the Lord.

Be still and know that I am God.

And all the rest will fall into place.

And I guarantee it --- and God guarantees it.

Jesus doesn't stop the storm in Mark 4 ----- He stills it.

“Quiet! Be Still!” ---- He says.

It's exactly the same in Psalm 107 ---- the storm isn't stopped --- the storm is stilled and hushed.

“He stilled the storm to a whisper;
the waves of the sea were hushed.”

Be still.

We've heard words about stillness ----- Bob Dylan --- Thomas Merton --- Meister Eckhart ---- Moses from exodus 14:14 ----- The Psalms --- Habakkuk --- Isaiah ----- Jesus Himself --- in Mark's Gospel.

We've had a few pockets of stillness --- I've paused a few times ---- hardly long enough to catch our breath really ---- but we've paused here and there a couple of times already.

Now let's take a moment to really still ourselves.

And don't get anxious in the stillness.

There is always someone who gets anxious in the stillness --- don't --- there is no need.

Our reading from Philippians says --- “Don't be anxious about anything...” -
-- least of all about being in the presence of God.

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him --- do not fret.”

“Be still and know that I am God.”

Be still.

Look at the windows ---- read scripture --- draw a picture --- write a love letter to God.

Look at the wondering questions on the front of the bulletin --- the worship minute.

Or ---- do nothing ----- just be still.

Let us pray.

Gracious God as Augustine of Hippo so rightfully said --- “Our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you.”

Lord our hearts are restless until they find rest --- quiet --- until they find stillness in you.

In a world that so values busyness --- in a world that so easily draws us into busyness ----- help us to hold up stillness ----- as valuable ---- faithful ---- and life giving --- honouring you.

Help us to be still Lord and wait for you.

Help us to make it a priority to be still --- not just here today --- once in a while --- but often --- and habitually --- intentionally.

Help us to live out ----- “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him --- do not fret.”

Help us to live out ----- “Be still and know that I am God.”

Help us to listen to your still small voice --- the voice that called out to Samuel in the quiet of the night --- the voice that called out to Elijah in quiet stillness amidst the wind ---- the earthquake --- and the fire --- and yet could still be heard.

Help us to remember that a strong argument is still strong even when it’s whispered --- just as you often whisper to us.

Still our hearts Lord.

Still our dispositions.

Grant us a Holy hush.

Provide unto us the peace that surpasses all understanding.

You are our God and we are your people.

Help us to listen --- as you call to us from your stillness.

All glory --- laud ---- and honour to you Lord.

Amen.