

Balance the Busy Life, Ps.62

Catch Your Breath #2

- ◇ **Intro:** (set up a disequilibrium)
- ◇ John Coffey, like the drink, only spelled different. John Coffey is the central character in the novel *The Green Mile*. The setting is death row of a southern prison in the 1930's. John Coffey is a large, black man who has been wrongly convicted of a brutal crime. The guards discover he also has a miraculous power to heal. It's as though he can mystically pull the illness from them and into his own, massive, powerful body, carry it away and release it. He also has a prophetic gift that allows him to see horrible evils committed by a person just by touching him.
- ◇ Paul, the head guard, comes to realize John is innocent and asks him if he wants him to fight to get him off death row. John, weeping, declines. "I's tired, boss. Tired of bein' on the road, lonely as a sparrow in the rain. Tired of not never having me a buddy to be with, or tell me where we's coming from or going to, or why. Mostly I'm tired of people being ugly to each other. I'm tired of all the pain I feel and hear in the world every day. There's too much of it. It's like pieces of glass in my head all the time. Can you understand?"
- ◇ Maybe you've felt it. In rock hard ways: prejudice, cruelty, newsreels of genocide in middle eastern nations, starvation in Africa, AIDS, rapes on campuses, drive-by shootings near Chicago highschoools. If I say columbine we don't think of beauty, though it is the name of the Colorado state flower.
- ◇ Maybe you've felt it in soft, rain-soaked ways: a child who doesn't converse much, a friend you haven't heard from, a promotion that went to someone else, a boyfriend that went to someone else.

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- ◇ I want you to feel this for a moment. It tells us a spiritual secret.
- ◇ **1. My soul needs something more than I can find here.**
- ◆ **A.** Blaise Pascal, the remarkable scientist (inventor of the scissors), theologian and Christian of the 17th century said,
 - ◇ *“the natural poverty of our feeble and mortal condition (is) so miserable that nothing can comfort us when we think on it closely.”*
- ◇ In order not to think on anything closely, he said, we turn to diversions to distract us and stir us. (It’s why prison is horrible punishment, when you are alone, with nothing to distract.)
- ◆ There is something else natural about us: happiness consists only in rest, not being stirred but being at rest. This instinct conflicts with our drive for diversion, with the confused, end-result being: we tend to be people who aim at rest through excitement.
 - ◇ 1) “Six flags, more fun!”
 - ◇ 2) There’s somebody here today that has had this thought: I need to go back to work to recover from vacation.” That’s what Pascal was talking about.
 - ◆ 3) And yet we are constantly stirred in our work too. Because we are skilled, and because of technology -we can get more done in less time. A generation ago it was predicted that in our day we would work 4 hour days because of technology. But we don’t. We work more because... we can.
 - ◇ We dial our lives up to “constant effort” setting –go to work at 5am, come home at 5pm. Eat a micro-flash meal. Remodel the bathroom until

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11pm. Miss a friends party “because I had to work.” No, you didn’t. You chose to work.

◇ “Well I have to pay for the new furniture, the second car, the pool chemicals. And I want to put in a bigger shower.” Yes, but you chose those things.

◇ v10, v9...

◇ **B.** So here’s a couple married 30 years who realizes all they’ve ever done together is work. And the attraction is slipping. (It’ doesn’t take 30 years always.)

◇ So here’s a church member, christian since birth, baptized, catechized, professed, even sent on a mission project once –who’s never heard God speak to her.

◆ Here’s a guy who knows all the bible stories, been to church his whole life, even ran the sunday school for years, but begins to wonder if the core promises of the Christian life are even true, because he doesn’t *feel* anymore joyful than his pagan neighbor seems to be.

◇ At best he’s impatient, at worst, angry with the people at work.

◇ He can’t seem to love his wife and children consistently even when things are going *well!*

◇ He’s burried pockets of anger about past pains. Present injustices fill up wells of longing for something more.

◆ Have you felt it? “There must be something more.”

◇ Alexander Solzhenitsyn said, “*The meaning of earthly existence lies not, as we have grown used to thinking, in prospering but in the development of the soul.*”

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- ◇ **C.** How do I know I need balance in my spirit? When your spirit is drying up you need to balance life with solitude and silence - attention to being with God, not just “doing devotions”.
- ◆ And how do I know when my spirit is drying up? (write down the ones the Holy Spirit highlights in your mind.)
 - ◇ When you lose laughter.
 - ◇ When you lose sorrow for other people.
 - ◇ When cruelty doesn't pain you.
 - ◇ When you don't notice small beauties anymore.
 - ◇ When you no longer enjoy what you used to enjoy.
 - ◇ When you very much dislike yourself, and have feelings of self-rejection.
 - ◇ When love seems very unlike you. The things of 1Cor.13.
 - ◇ When you feel desparate for distractions of one kind or another -your spirit is unbalanced.
- ◇ All these things are indicators of a worn out, thirsty spirit that most often comes from the stress of an overly busy life.
- ◇ **2. My heart has a God-shaped vacume. I am restless till I rest in God.**
- ◆ Some say St. Augustine said that. Some credit Pascal. Either way, Christians have affirmed it as true.
 - ◇ *My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I shall never be shaken.” Psalms 62:1, 2, NIV.*
- ◇ **A.** Spiritual formation comes from being near God often.
- ◆ There are of course many places we cannot find God, but wherein we try nonetheless.

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- ◇ Spiritual formation does not come by nature, or age.
- ◇ Spiritual formation does not come by the handling of holy things, or even communicating biblical ideas. That is to say, even a preacher of the Word can fail to find holiness.
- ◇ It is not caught like the flu from hanging around other church members.
- ◆ Where does it come from?
 - ◇ *“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.” Acts 4:13, NIV.*
- ◆ Let me show you Mt. Arbel, along the Sea of Galilee. The traditional place where a Rabbi would go for prayer (slides 113-115, 456, 460, 465, 466, 470, 473, 474)...Now listen to our Lord’s habit...(leave silent pauses)
 - ◇ “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” Mark 1:35, NIV.
 - ◇ “After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.” Mark 6:46;
 - ◇ “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.” Luke 6:12, NIV.
 - ◇ “After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,” Matthew 14:23, NIV.
- ◆ **B.** Spiritual formation comes from being near God often. Why did Jesus do this? Why is spiritual formation not possible in the currents of life? Nearness to God is blockaded by busyness

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because busyness is about me doing, me making it happen.

- ◇ We are human beings, not human doings.
- ◇ God said “I Am”, not “I Do” is my name.
- ◇ God is more interested in who you are becoming than in what you are doing.

◇ *If you stay in the current, you get worn out and swept down stream to where you never intended to be.*

◆ **C.** How do we grow the spirit, our spirit? We hang out with God. I need to practice silence and solitude to grow in God.

- ◇ *“This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.” Isaiah 30:15, NIV.*

◆ **Definition:** Solitude and silence is when you stop doing, stop controlling life and those around you, if even in your thoughts. It's when you release the future to God instead of having to try to manage it by your work. Inner silence has to do with a quiet heart and it can happen even in a crowd, but outer silence can help you find it more easily.

- ◇ Silence and solitude balance the noise and crowdedness of our lives.

◇ **Conclusion:**

◆ **illy:** What do trout do? They live in fast flowing streams. But how do they stay there? They have to get out of the currents and rest. There are at least 3 ways

- ◇ 1) Get behind a rock. There the water is still. It forms an eddy.
- ◇ 2) Get aside to a quiet pool.
- ◇ 3) Go deep, below the current. The current itself is

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slower in deep waters.

- ◆ To be alone, and quiet with God means I will have to limit what I do, doesn't it!
 - ◇ 1) Get behind the rock of your salvation
 - ◇ 2) let him lead and meet you in the quiet waters
 - ◇ 3) Go deeper than you have been
- ◆ Often our plate is full, but our cup is empty. We need to learn the habit of holy-subtraction, cutting things out of my life so that I actually live, instead of being a machine.
 - ◇ Go somewhere this week. If you've never done it, make it a goal to do so just 3 times.
 - ◇ Go somewhere to be alone with God. Don't bring a book, or your ipod. Just sit in stillness for 15 minutes and listen for him. He's always talking.