

"DESERT SPIRITUALITY: A WAY TO SURVIVE MINISTRY"

"Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved, you will discover within yourself a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply."

(Henri J.M. Nouwen)

PRELUDE

WELCOME/INTRO

Rev. Dr. Rebeka Maples, COSSO Spiritual Formation Director

SONG

"Seek Ye First The Kingdom Of God"

UMH 405

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: In the midst of chaos and confusion,

All: We have come to worship God.

In the midst of hunger and war,

We have come to pray for life-giving bread and peace.

In the midst of doubt and despair,

We have come to pray for faith and hope.

In the midst of hatred and death,

We have come to pray for love and life.

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: How good it is to worship you, O Lord,

All: And live together in unity.

Lord, open our lips,

And our mouths shall proclaim your praise.

Open our hearts,

And our prayers will flow to you.

Open our minds,

And we will meet you in the noise and the silence wherever we are. Amen.

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18

See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Of all the things we do in ministry, prayer is one of the simplest and one of the most difficult. We have trouble just sitting and being in the presence of God. The distractions in our minds and our lives quickly take us in different directions. Even our praying can become noisy. The very thought of simply listening for the still small voice, without talking, quickly becomes distracting. Shouldn't

we be doing something, the voices shout at us. Shouldn't we be going somewhere or at least saying something holy? We're too busy to waste time like this, just sitting and listening. But it is the voice of God within that brings calm and direction. It drains the negative energy and carries us beyond the storms of the present into the presence of God which is everywhere.
(pause)

PRAYING WITH WORDS

Leader: Abba, Yahweh, God, whom the heavens declare,

All: May your name be held holy, your authority come.

May your longing be fulfilled – as in heaven, so on earth.

Give us today the bread of tomorrow,

And forgive our debts as we have already forgiven others.

Do not draw us into sinful enticement,

But set us free from all distractions;

For all authority, power and glory are yours alone, forever and ever.

Amen.

(from *Alternative Service Book*, 1980)

(pause)

SONG “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying”

FWS 2193

PRAY ALWAYS

We know many ways of praying, we teach them and we practice them, but sometimes they don't work like they used to. Maybe that's because our lives look nothing like what they used to, and maybe that's not a problem but the point- We need to learn how to pray again, moving from our heads to our hearts, without all our words and solutions, so we can see ourselves anew and "rejoice always, pray without ceasing," and let God do God's work of transformation. "Let God be God," the desert tells us.

(pause)

PRAYING WITH "PATIENT TRUST"

by Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, French Jesuit priest, scientist and poet (1881-1955)

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress

that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—

and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you;

your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,

let them shape themselves, without undue haste.

Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.
Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.

**Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.**

(pause)

PRAYING WITHOUT WORDS

Henri Nouwen, Jesuit priest and prolific writer on prayer and spirituality, reminds us,

"It is to the silence that we are called: words are the instrument of the present world, but
silence is the mystery of the future... our ministry must also point beyond our words to the
unspeakable mystery of God." *(Henri J.M. Nouwen)*

Let us move into a moment of silence, as we calm our hearts with no words or just a few words to
help us move from our heads to our hearts. Not thinking, we say -

Lord, have mercy... or simply Jesus...

(SILENCE)

SONG **"Sweet Hour of Prayer"**

UMH 496

BLESSING

Go now and listen:

Hear the Word of God, in the silence.

Pray the Word of God, in your praying.

And when all the words are said, and all the prayers are prayed,

May God bless you with enough time and space to simply be - silent.

POSTLUDE

SOURCES ON DESERT SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

(many others are available, just start with a few):

The Way of the Heart by Henri J.M. Nouwen

Out of the Solitude by Henri J.M. Nouwen

Prayer by Richard J. Foster

Soul Feast by Marjorie J. Thompson

"Patient Trust", from poems by Teilhard de Chardin