

## **Message – Rev. Jim Goos**

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Your sight O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer.  
Amen

Our Psalm refers to people who “delight in the law of the Lord.” They meditate on it day and night. They are happy, and they are like trees planted by streams of water, which bear fruit in due season, and have leaves that do not wither.

I would like to share a couple events from my life that provide a personal example of what that can look like.

Several years ago I felt God asking me to focus on Him all day long. This was in addition to time I was already spending in the morning after breakfast, a shorter time after lunch and after supper.

In this new request, God wasn't asking for time in addition to that, but that I be focused on Him during that time as well as during the rest of the day. For example, I can be working on a sermon in my office and still be aware that my wife Rose is in a nearby room reading or working. I can be open to hearing her speak to me. She shouldn't have to shout at me to get my attention.

God can shout at us if it is necessary, but He prefers to speak in a gentle whisper. “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). I have been working at being more aware of God's presence, and listening for His gentle whispers in everything I do all day long.

About a week-and-a-half ago, a few mornings in a row I woke up at 4 or 4:30. At that hour I am usually very still, usually asleep. There are no distractions. Once in a while I do wake up early, and I open my mind to God and wait for someone or something to come to mind. If it's a person I pray for him or her.

I remembered a girl that I had dated when I was about 20, and a specific event that happened. We had been dating about 6 months and I was falling head over heels for her. We were

walking along and talking when she said, “My old boyfriend from my hometown is here in the city and wants me back.”

As I was reflecting on that event and those words, God whispered a sentence to me that struck me like lightning bolt. But I’m going to leave you in suspense for a moment and take you back to what I remember from that evening.

I honestly don’t remember what I said to her. But I know that I felt like she had stabbed me in the heart. And I know that I didn’t say any of the things that I should have said – starting with how hurt and threatened I felt, and how much I cared about her and about us.

I don’t remember our conversation, but we parted that evening agreeing to continue to see each other; and I gave her permission to see her old boyfriend if she wanted to. I went home feeling that there was a good chance that she would one day choose him over me. That’s not exactly what happened, but a few months later I felt stabbed in the heart again by something she did, and I ended our relationship.

The words that God whispered to me at 4 am a week or so ago are, “Maybe she was asking you to be exclusive.” Those words tore at my heart. It took quite a while for me to accept how badly I misunderstood her words and her intentions, and ended up destroying our relationship.

I know now that at that time I was not emotionally mature or secure enough to navigate a serious relationship with her, or any girl. God knew that too, and He knew that he had someone else in mind for me, and probably had someone else in mind for this young woman. Painful as it was for each of us, it was better that we separated at this time rather than later.

I was comforted by the fact that I didn’t sense any reprimand from God. He wasn’t out to make me feel guilty for what I did to this sweet girl. His point was simply, “Jim I had a word for you that

night in that situation, if you had simply come to me, asked for my help and listened for me to speak to you.”

I knew that I wasn't listening to God that evening, or any other time because God and I had had a conversation 2 years earlier. That came to mind the following morning, again about 4 a.m.

All the way through Grade 13 I wondered what I should do after I graduate. All of my teachers, and my parents, pounded the message, “you have to go to university to get a good education and then a good job.”

I had no real problem with that, except to be educated to do what? I looked at my teachers and wondered, “Could I be a teacher?” Probably not a good one; I would be far too nervous standing in front of a class of students day after day.

During the course of the year I considered a variety of occupations, but didn't find one that appealed to me. I don't remember the specific time or date, but probably near the end of the school year, one of my 2 older brothers wrote a letter to my parents saying that he was going to quit his job in Toronto, go to university to get his BA, and then go to Seminary to be a pastor.

As my Mom read this letter out loud to my Dad, my sister and I, when she read the words, “to be a pastor” my heart heard the words, “That should be you.” I knew immediately that was God speaking to me.

My response was, “I can't. I am too quiet, way too nervous to ever stand in front of a congregation, and don't have anywhere near enough faith in God to be a pastor.” I then pointed God to some people that I thought were better candidates and left it at that. As far as I was concerned that conversation was finished.

That morning at 4 a.m., as I pondered all of this, I sensed God whisper, “You walked away after you gave your response to me, but I still had this to say to you: Jim, you realize that you are an empty vessel, and it's good that you realize that. My Son uses

empty vessels. He is a fountain of life and if you invite Him in, He will fill you, and together with the Holy Spirit He will give you everything you need and will be everything you need and more.”

Today I can add that Jesus told the Samaritan woman he met at a well, that He is a fountain of life. He could be that fountain of life for her and for everyone who believes in Him as they invite Him in to their life. So this word that God spoke to me is not just for me, not just for those He calls to be pastors, but for anyone and everyone who lives by faith in Jesus.

Going back to that early morning, as I reflected on God’s gentle whisper, and on the one from the day before, I sensed God whispering, “This is why I asked you to be focused on me all the time. I have been there for you every moment of your life; I had a word for you in every situation, an answer to every question, a solution to every problem. For a long time you weren’t listening at all, and didn’t hear any of my words to you. Then, later, you did start to listen, but only heard some of what I had to say because you only listened some of the time.”

My response was, “I want to hear all of your whispers, all of your answers, all of your solutions.” I have known and preached for a long time that God loves us, and knows and wants what is best for us. He is life and He gives life, life that is abundant and eternal.

He is constantly working in us to lead us along that path of life. He has words that will help us understand the words and actions of people around us, so that we can build relationships rather than destroy them; words that will help us navigate decisions and situations so that we stay on God’s path of life. He has an answer for every question and a solution for every problem.

One point I want to emphasize is that God is not a great genie in the sky. We don’t get to choose to accept and follow the words we like and ignore the ones we don’t. We must learn to accept

and obey all of them. God loves us and knows what is best for us. That's where His gentle whispers lead us.

I also want to emphasize that hearing God's gentle whispers, and having Jesus live in us as a fountain of life, does not give us a free pass out of, or around, suffering. God promises to be with us in our suffering, show us the way through it, and even carry us when necessary, so that we come out of times of suffering stronger in our character, deeper and stronger in our faith, and having learned whatever He wanted us to learn through that time of suffering.

I didn't agree with God's first word to me: that I should be a pastor. God had an answer to my objection, but I didn't wait to hear it. However, about 10 years later I invited Jesus into my life and was willing to be whatever He wanted me to be, including going to Seminary to become a pastor.

God knows we are not perfect. He knows we will have to struggle with some of His words to us. He is with us in the struggle so long as we invite and allow Him to struggle with us, to guide us and to bring us to the moment when we can trust Him enough to say "yes."

During my time in Seminary, one of the requirements was to serve 3 months in a hospital or similar institution under the supervision of a chaplain. It was there that I learned that I had a poor image of myself, which is why it was so easy for me to believe that that sweet girl that I cared about would likely choose her old boyfriend over me.

I also learned that I didn't trust my feelings and therefore didn't do well at sharing them, even with people I care about, and that I was shutting out the people I cared about the most.

I could continue to share more of my story, but we have a time limit. Suffice it to say that I learned to love and accept who I am and who God is transforming me to be.

My point is that God took that empty vessel, that fragile young man who was me, and showed me what He can do when we put ourselves in His hands and let Him do His thing: He transforms us into a new creation.

Along the way God introduced me to that beautiful young woman that He had in mind for me, and me for her, all along; someone who delights in having me share with her what is going on in me and in my life; someone who could love what she saw; someone I could love in return.

I have learned to meditate on God much of the time, still aiming for all of the time. I know Jesus is a fountain of life living in me. My hope and prayer is that everyone who looks at me sees that fountain of life and is drawn toward Him so that we can help them receive Him into themselves and receive for themselves, the life that He gives. Amen