

Reeks: 'n Regula vir die Lewe

Titel: ... Jaarliks retreat

Prediker: Trevor Hudson

Datum: 20 January 2013

Good evening, friends, it's good to be with you. Once a quarter here at Mosaic they let someone who's over 60 come and talk in the evening. Tonight is the night, so I'm sorry that you had to rock up tonight and I'm here. But it's really great to be with you. It's my first Sunday with you in the New Year, and I want to wish you, each one of you a very special New Year. I'm deeply aware that, for some of you, it's not an easy start to the year.

I'm sure that there are people here tonight who are entering the New Year without someone that they've loved for a long time. I'm aware that for some of us it may be a very difficult year in terms of business and work and relationship. This is why at the end of the service I'd like just to pray a blessing over you, young and old, that we will know God's blessing in a very deep way in our lives this year.

Can I ask you just to reach out for that little leaflet inside the bulletin? You will notice that there are three readings there, three little glimpses into the life of Jesus, and I'm going to read them to you. I want you to get a sense of something that Jesus often did, and I hope that we can follow Him in this respect more faithfully this year. The first reading, as you can see, comes from Mark 6:31. Here Jesus had been ministering to people very deeply. It was a time of much ministry. And then we read these words: "there were so many people who were coming and going that they didn't even have a chance to eat, Jesus said to them, come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place so we can get some rest."

And then, in Luke 5:16, here is another glimpse into the life of Jesus. "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places where He could pray." And then, Luke 6:12-13, and this was just before He was going to make a massive decision, when he was going to call His 12 disciples. Look at what He did. "One of these days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray. And He spent the night praying to God. And then, when morning came, He called His disciples to Him, and He chose 12 of them whom He also designated to be His apostles." We thank God tonight for those little moments from Jesus' life, and we pray that God will speak to us tonight through them.

I want to share with you one of my favourite stories about a young guy who wanted to join a monastery, where they were very quiet and silent all the time. And he wanted to join the strictest monastery. He really wanted to be silent. So he joined this one monastery, and in this monastery you were allowed one sentence every ten years. After 10 years the abbot, the guy who is in charge, has an interview with this guy. And this guy says to him, you've got one sentence. What would you like to say? So this young chap says, "You know, every morning I have All Bran Flakes. Do you mind if you could have Rice Crispies?" So the guy says, "Okay, I'll sort that out."

Another ten years of silence go by. He gets called into the office and he's allowed his one sentence, after 20 years now. So the guy says, "Man, my pillow, it's quite hard. Do you mind if I can get one with just a bit softer?" The guy says, "I'll sort that out for you." After 30 years in silence the guy comes in, sits with the guy in charge, and the guy says, "What do you want to say?" And this guy now, this young guy, who's now old, 50 years of age, says, "I've had enough, I'm leaving this monastery." The head guy says, "I'm not surprised. You're always complaining."

That's a light-hearted story, but I want to extend a very serious invitation. The invitation that I'd like to just offer you tonight to think about is an invitation to plan, sometime this year, a spiritual retreat, a time when you can be alone with God, maybe a day, maybe a day and night, maybe a weekend. That is my invitation to you tonight, and I want to say, friends, that it's an invitation that I am not extending to you. It's an invitation that I think comes from God through the life of Jesus Christ.

If I were to ask you tonight, before you go to sleep, just to read a gospel, and sometimes that's a very good thing to do, just to sit down and read a gospel, read the whole of Matthew or the whole of Mark, the whole of Luke or the whole of John, just to get a feel of Jesus' life. If you were to do that, on the one hand you would notice that Jesus was a very busy man. Jesus was always active, on the go, preaching, teaching, healing, feeding, being with friends, bringing his disciples together and sending them out. He was always on the go. He was a very active man, always engaged in His Father's work. That's what you would notice on one hand.



On the other hand you would notice that, again and again and again He would withdraw from activity to be quiet. And that's why I read those three readings to you before I started preaching. I wanted you to see how often Jesus withdrew in order to be with His Heavenly Father, so that He could reengage His work again, recharged, reenergised, re-empowered by His Father. And those things happened often in those moments when he was alone in the quiet. Does this make sense? Please nod if it does. If it doesn't I'll try again. Jesus retreated in order to advance. Does that make sense? He retreated to be with the Father in order to advance with the Father in the Father's work.

And so all I want to say tonight is that if Jesus needed time alone with the Father, so do you and I. This is why, throughout the ages, people who've made an impact for Christ on their generation have been people who had moments of spiritual retreat built into their lives. You name me one person in history who's had an impact for God, an impact for Jesus Christ, and I guarantee you they were men and women who knew what spiritual retreat was all about.

One of my favourite books is about a South African. His name is William Duma. He was a Baptist minister, and he died a few years ago. He was a wonderful man and he had an incredible ministry of healing and of giving spiritual counsel and advice. He wasn't an educated man, but people from all over the world flocked to be with him. Educated people, academics, CEOs, would spend time with this humble servant of God who would speak the word of God into their lives.

A biography was written of him. It's called "You Take the Glory, Lord." In this book the biographer says the secret of William Duma's life lay in two commitments that he made to God. The one commitment was that at midnight every evening, he would spend an hour with God. How is that, hey, at midnight? And once a year he would go to the mountains at Emolweni. He called it his hiding place with God. I love that: his hiding place with God. He hid with God for two, three days. And then it was out of that retreat that he advanced in ministry.

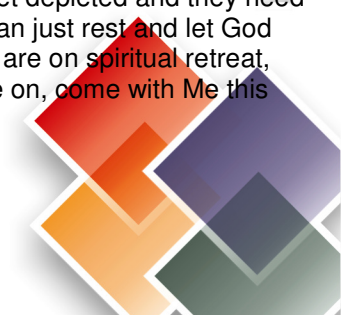
And so, friends, I want to get that invitation out tonight. Can I just whet your appetite a little bit by describing some of the gifts that God gives us when we go to be alone with God? I can witness to some of these gifts myself, but really these are gifts that God often gives to those who go into the quiet. We discover this in the story of Elijah. Do you know him? He is one of the powerful prophets in the Old Testament. Elijah once in his own life needed to go on a spiritual retreat. And you can read his story for yourself, and if you're making notes please make a note of this: 1 Kings 18 and 1 Kings 19.

In 1 Kings 18 Elijah is on a roll. Everything is going well. He calls down fire from heaven. He defeats the false prophets. He prays successfully for rain to come to break a drought. He's doing incredible things for God. In the 19th chapter the wheels come off. You know that you can have moments of success and then you just hit the ground. And that happened for Elijah. In that dark moment a woman said to him, I'm coming to get you, Elijah. And you know what Elijah did? Elijah retreated. He had a time when he went to be alone with God.

And when he was alone with God, and you read this for yourself, there were gifts that God gave to Elijah in the quiet. I want to describe three of them for you very quickly. I'm just whetting your appetite, that's all. The one gift that God gave to Elijah when he was alone was the gift of renewed energy and vitality. In the beginning of the chapter Elijah wanted to end things. He in fact said to God, "God, I wish I was dead." Then Elijah found what they called a broom tree, and he went to sleep. And he woke up, and the angels came with some food. Do you remember? And then he went to sleep again, and then the angels came and gave him more food.

Now, a retreat is like a broom tree where you can just rest and where God can give you energy again. That's what happens on retreat; the gift of rest often gets given to us. How often did Jesus say, "Come unto Me, those of you who are tired and weary and burdened, and I will give you rest?" We need this. We live hectic lives here in Gauteng. Often do you hear, you know, that word, "hectic". How are things going? Hectic! How are the relationships? Hectic! How is school? Hectic! How is varsity? Hectic! Everything is hectic. We're just on the go all the time.

I was walking through Durban once. I saw a name of a restaurant: "Gobble and Go." We're always on the go. Things are hectic, and what happens when life gets hectic is that our spiritual batteries get depleted and they need to be recharged. And it's often in these moments when we are alone with God that we can just rest and let God begin to revitalise us, physically, mentally and spiritually. That's what happens when we are on spiritual retreat, when we are alone with God. Jesus says to us tonight like he said to his disciple, "Come on, come with Me this



year to a lonely place and rest. I want to give you the gift of refreshment, not so that you can bail out of life, but so that you can advance, so that you can go forward well.”

But there's another gift that God gives us. It's not a guaranteed gift, but it's often given to us, and it's the gift of a deeper encounter with the Lord. That happened to Elijah. He was under the broom tree. He gets reenergised, and then he goes for 40 days he travels to the mountain. There he finds a cave. He's alone. This is his hiding place with God. And if you read 1 Kings 19 you will notice two things. In the cave Elijah just pours out his heart to God. That's what happens when you are alone with God. You've got time to just pour out your heart to God.

Usually in daily life we just have quick conversations with God during the day. You know, we're driving to work. God, will you help me today? We're into another meeting. God, will you now help me? You know, it's, like, on the go, on the go, on the go. But in a retreat you can stop and you can pour out your heart and talk very deeply with God. And that's what Elijah did. But then something else happens. God speaks to Elijah. Do you remember, not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in the still, small voice? And that's what happens often on retreat. We can pour out our hearts with God and then, when we've talked out hearts out, we can just become quiet and open to what the Lord may be saying to us.

You see a retreat is often a place where we can very deeply meditate on Scripture. Retreat has often been the place where I have meditated most deeply upon the Scriptures. And often as we meditate upon God's Word, God speaks to us. We have an encounter, a first-hand encounter with the speaking God. It happens again and again and again. And what God says to us through the Scriptures can change our lives.

I remember the first time I went on a spiritual retreat. I'm not going to give you the background. I was 29 years of age. The wheels came off of my life, and I found a place in Bez Valley. And there was a little place, a retreat centre there, and I went there for three days. I was on the verge of giving up the ministry. I was tired, desperate and burdened.

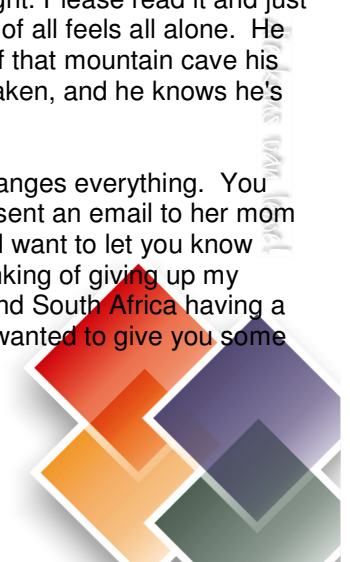
A nun greeted me at the door. I never forget she had blue jeans on. I'd never met a nun in my life with blue jeans, but I thought she must be okay. And she welcomed me in, and then she showed me my room. I had a little room, bed, a little table, and I never forget her parting word to me as she left me. She said, "Trevor, if you need anything, just call me and I'll show you how to live without it."

Then she gave me a precious gift. She said, "Trevor, I want you to read John 7:37-39." And I said to her, "What else would you like me to read? I'm going to be here for three days." She said, "No, no, no, I just want you to read John 7:37-39." I said, "But that will take me 30 seconds. I'm here for three days." I began to get panicky. She said, "No, just John 7:37-39." And as I lived with those words for three days, they came alive with God's fire in my heart. And that's why I'm standing here today, partly because of an experience; Three days, in Bez Valley, where the Lord met me and spoke to me.

The Lord is very gracious, and when we begin to give the Lord some time he often shows up in a way that touches our life profoundly. God is looking for people who will seek Him with all their hearts and mind. And then He comes and He meets us where we are. And that's always a gift. We can't manufacture this. It's a gift, the gift of a new encounter with God. It happened to Elijah. It's happened for people throughout the ages. It can happen for ordinary people like you and me today.

But there's one more gift that God often gives often on a retreat. God gives us the gift of a new perspective on life. That's what Elijah received. You must please read 1 Kings 19 before you go to bed tonight. Please read it and just get a sense of what happens to Elijah. When Elijah goes on that retreat-journey, he first of all feels all alone. He feels that God has forsaken him. He feels that his life is over. But when he comes out of that mountain cave his perspective has changed. He knows he's not alone. He knows that he hasn't been forsaken, and he knows he's still got a job of work to do.

Perspective changes everything. If you can change your perspective on something it changes everything. You must have heard about that student who went to UJ. She was there, first term, and she sent an email to her mom and dad. And she just says, "Dear mom and dad, I've come to the end of my first term. I want to let you know what's going on. I met a guy. He's unemployed, and I've moved in with him, and I'm thinking of giving up my studies at UJ, and I also may be pregnant. I'm also thinking maybe of just travelling around South Africa having a real jol. Yours faithfully, your daughter. PS: I failed mathematics. The rest is a lie, but I wanted to give you some perspective on my life."



Perspective changes everything. But it is so easy for us to lose perspective, is it not? Usually we lose it because we get overwhelmed. We're always on the go, and we're trying to hold a family together, and we're trying to get to work. We leave home in the morning five o'clock, and in all the coming and going things just get out of perspective. And the one thing that happens on a retreat is that God gives you His perspective on life. You begin to share His perspective. You begin to see what really matters, and that's a wonderful gift. And you can then advance. You can come back to life.

Have I whetted your appetite yet? Come on, that's the invitation. It's a wonderful invitation. I'm sure that, as we're go into 2013, some of you are already thinking of what holiday you can plan for yourself this coming year. I'm sure you are doing that already. I'm sure you're already thinking of the next holiday, and you're wanting to plan it just to that you can get through the next few weeks and months. Can I suggest that a spiritual retreat is like a holiday, a vacation, with the Lord? And can I invite you to think carefully, as you plan your year, as you think carefully, to plan time, just once, for a time alone with the Lord on retreat?

And one of the wonderful things about Mosaic, and it really is a gift, you really are blessed, you have a beautiful retreat place. It's a wonderful gift. You have a retreat place just down the road. Plan now, a day, a weekend. All the details are inside that bulletin. Phone the office. Say, I want to take up God's invitation to spend some time alone with the Lord. We retreat in order to advance. That's what Jesus did, and that's what he calls us to do. Let me pray for you, and then I just want to bless you if I may.

Father, Abba, You are the God of the desert, the God of the wilderness, the God of those quiet, lonely places, as well as the God of the noisy streets and the busy city. Help us to hear Your call to retreat, to be with You, so we can talk to You deeply and listen to You, and reflect deeply upon your word. Help us to hear Your call into that lonely place where Your Son, Jesus, often went. May we go there too so that we can grow a real, living, firsthand relationship with You. Help us to hear Your call, and thank You, Lord, that You put in our hearts a desire to do this. Come and do that tonight. Come and do that tonight. Place in our hearts a longing to be with You. This is our prayer, and we offer this prayer to You in the Name of Jesus, and for His sake, amen.

Friends, I'm going to ask you to stand, and I want to bless you. And I ask you just to receive the blessing. I love doing this at the beginning of the year. I just pray God's blessing upon you tonight, that God will bless you, that God will bless you spiritually and you will find yourself coming alive again this year to God, to Jesus, and to His Spirit. May God bless you! May God bless you, friends. May God bless you mentally. Where there is confusion and despair and down-ness, may God bless you with His shining light, with clarity, with clearness. May God bless your minds and renew them deeply.

May God bless your feelings, especially if they are heavy and broken and sad. May God bless you again with colour in your emotions. May you come alive again and feel again what it means to feel joy and happiness and lightness. May God bless you! May God bless your relationships. Where there is distance, may there be closeness, and where there is hardness, may there be tenderness. May God's blessing rest upon your homes and your friendships. May God bless your work, that it may be effective and helpful, and a blessing to others and to you as well. May God bless your studies this coming year. May your studies be a place of growth and discovery and learning. May God bless you!

May God bless you just with a new sense of aliveness, that you may come alive again to this beautiful, beautiful world that has been disfigured, but to come alive again to creation, to the sky and to the grass and to flowers and butterflies and dogs and cats. May just God bring us alive again! May God bring you alive to your own gifts and to your talents and what you can give to others. But above all, may God bring you alive tonight to God, to the glory of Jesus Christ, and to the deep murmurings of the Holy Spirit within our lives. In the name of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I bless you, amen.

Have a good week, friends. God bless, hey. Take care.

