

## *Re: A Retreat*

Mk 6:30-34

Make no mistake – it wasn't always easy for Jesus to love people. At various times He felt all of the same things about them that you and I have felt. But we don't remember Him that way. We remember Him for His love. He saw the evil and injustices more clearly than any of us ever will; but He was not overwhelmed by them because He was able to keep the picture in focus. He would pull back from people in order to see them more clearly. Then He would return loving that multitude of blundering men and women, not simply for what they were but for what they might become.

You and I desperately need the ability to do that same thing. If we stay too close to anything for too long, the picture becomes distorted; and the problems get blown out of proportion. Once in a while, we must pull away and stand apart in order to see people as they really are.

A time of retreat is necessary for at least one other reason. It is this: There comes a time when we can't do anything for others until first we have done something for ourselves.

Jesus and His disciples must have been feeling that. They had given themselves without reserve. Now they were faced with the necessity of renewing their own strength. What good would it do for them to keep on giving when they had little or nothing left to give?

In our emphasis on practical religion, we sometimes leave out this very vital dimension. All of our emphasis is on giving, serving and doing. And this is well and good, but we must not stop with that. This cannot be our total emphasis. We must take into account the truth that it is worthless to keep on writing checks unless we take the time to put some money in the bank. It accomplishes nothing to keep on drawing up the bucket after the well has run dry. If our emphasis is to be on practical religion, then let us be practical enough to recognize that we cannot feed a hungry world from an empty dish.

Before we start giving ourselves to the world, we should, first of all, see to it that we have a self that is worth the giving. Otherwise our lives become frail and thin. Our efforts become futile and frantic; and our message becomes uncertain and unconvincing. Jesus never allowed that to happen in His own life and ministry. He mastered the fine art of retreat. He got away from the world in order to return to the world, renewed, revitalized, and ready to serve.

How urgently you and I need to learn that same lesson. In all of our lives, there comes a time when we must do something besides try a little harder. Some problems cannot be handled; some challenges cannot be met by mere energetic enthusiasm. We need insight; we need wisdom; we need courage; we need power; we need spiritual reserves. Jesus had all of these, and much of His secret is written in our Gospel reading: "Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a while." He saw people more clearly, loved them more deeply, and served them more effectively, because He had mastered the fine art of retreat.

*Peace and Love*