
Hide & Seek

based on Jeremiah 29: 11-14

Many people spend their life running from God. Sometimes they get really close to success and then their ego, or lack of faith, lets them down.

We read in James 4: 7-10, "So, let God work His will in you. Yell aloud **NO** to the Devil and watch him make himself scarce. Say a quiet, **YES** to God and He will be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner life. Quit playing the field. Hit bottom, cry your eyes out. The fun and games are over. Get serious, really serious. Get down on your knees before the Master - it's the only way you'll get on your feet."

We know what we **should** be doing. Most of us have known it since Sunday school. We see the difference between right and wrong - how to love each other; what Christ/God is looking for; what Christ has already done for us; how God's 'road map,' the Bible, will help to lead us through the troubles of this earthly life, if only we put our trust in Him.

I worry when I see small congregations, closed churches, lack of religious education in schools and a lack of respect for each other. This all points to an absence of love in our world.

We see wars all across this wondrous planet. Megalomaniacs are dividing the nations with lies and manipulation. 'Fake news' is now a "thing", and it's designed to stir up trouble and make money for their own pockets.

There are, and have been, many injustices throughout history, by those who do not follow in the footsteps of Christ. We, as Christians who follow the map of life that Jesus showed us, find these injustices appalling. But what can **we** do about it?

Billy Graham, in his early ministry, tells of a time when he was visiting a town to preach a sermon. Wanting to mail a letter, he asked a young boy if he knew where the post-office was. When the boy tells him, Dr. Graham thanks him and says, "If you come to the Baptist church this evening, you can hear me telling people the way to heaven."

"I don't think I'll be there", the boy said. "You don't even know the way to the post-office!"

I have no doubt that Dr. Graham knew the way, and I know that he dedicated his life to showing us that way.

Have you ever been lost? You have a map, but it seems to bear no relationship to the region through which you are travelling. You think you'll ask the next person you see, but the next person is on the other side of the road, so you decide instead, to ask the NEXT person you see. Sherry tells me that, this is a MAN thing to do.

When you finally do ask a person the way, it turns out that this individual has just recently moved to town, and to add to your stress, he is from another country.

Although he does know the way, he has a difficult time with the language. However, eventually both he and you seem satisfied, so you drive off with great optimism.

Five minutes later, you are lost again. Then you pass a sign that you hadn't seen before and suddenly you realize this is the right road, and you know that you will reach your destination.

So, we recognize that we have been lost, from time to time. And it's not a pleasant experience. However, the majority of us are far more lost than in our little motoring example.

The short story about Billy Graham indicated the wide rift between the person who is lost, and the one who wishes to show them the way.

In Isaiah 55:6-7 we hear from this prophet. "Seek God while He's still here to be found, pray to Him while He's close at hand. Let the wicked abandon their way of life and the evil their way of thinking. Let them come back to God, who is merciful. Come back to our God, who is lavish with forgiveness."

Clergy throughout the world, have been striving for centuries to **show the way**. They have been using their talents to show an errant mankind that they may be making a **wrong turn!** We have been listening, and not listening to them, for just as long.

Why don't we listen, should be the first question. We don't listen because we think the preacher is preaching to the person in the next pew. We so easily see the faults in others, and are totally oblivious to our own.

Why is this? I don't know! What we really need to make us listen, is a good, sharp shock, *to quote Gilbert & Sullivan*.

When we do receive one of those jolts, when someone almost has to hit us over the head with a hammer to make us understand, we certainly listen. We usually feel stupid, (the obvious is after all 'obvious'), and we chastise ourselves for missing it the first time.

I went to Sunday-school, to church, to youth group, to scouts. I taught Sunday-school etc., etc. Then I became too old, too sophisticated, too self-reliant to go to church. Worship was something done by primitive natives, as they bowed down to some pagan idol. I had the future before me. I would be the architect of my own destiny. I didn't need a lot of religious mumbo-jumbo in my life – there was no room for it.

I had my part-time job, my school, my tennis, and most importantly, my friends. None of my friends attended church. Sunday morning was for sleeping in. Hey, if I wanted to talk with God, I could do it from anywhere - no special building required. Besides, my talks with God were usually something like, "O God, I'll never go out drinking with my friends again, if you will only take away this headache."

My own ongoing journey with God has taken a number of turns and has contained many forked roads and even dead-ends. I first began thinking about a Saviour who would talk with me. Then I re-introduced myself to Him when I joined the Masonic Order.

There is much rich language in the actions and their explanations, which form the rituals in Freemasonry, the majority of which has been taken from the Old Testament.

This ritual can become somewhat repetitious to the ear after many listenings, and I confess that it became so to me. Then I was asked to take a more active role, and to present some of the ritual myself. This proved very stressful, but as I learned these writings, I began, slowly, to understand their meaning.

I took it upon myself to research certain passages, that I might state them correctly, get the right emphasis on the right syllable. This is how it started for me. My research, slowly but surely, led me to speak with members who were clergy, ministers such as Les Dean, Hal Wilson, Maurice McLeod. These men led me, directed me, urged me and, yes, pushed me, into a more intimate relationship with the creator.

The Spirit moves in mysterious ways. I might not have become a Mason. I may not have met these 3 men, and others, who influenced my life so profoundly. Yet, I know, that through these men, the Great Architect of the Universe took time to think about me!

I began to realize that I was not totally in charge of my destiny. How could I have been so egotistical as to think that this speck of humanity that I am, could in any way, be as important as I had once thought I was?

Suddenly I realized that there was an order to life, an order in the world, order in the universe, that could not have been created by accident. Each time I took a look at evolutionary theory, I realized that even this had been created by the hand of God.

I found God and am constantly finding God – by doing something! And, God became more real to me through my activities in Freemasonry.

One of the most worrisome aspects of our fast-track lives, is the overkill and abundance of information that is available on the internet for anybody to see. Kids can tune-in to pornography, anti-semitic writings, racism, every nasty, evil thing you could think of – unless, of course, their parents are super vigilant.

One of the oldest computer statements is: garbage in, garbage out. What we have to do is to look for content that is good, things that will satisfy the heart, something that improves our lives and the lives of our families.

Surely, we all want to improve! Nobody wants to aspire to be mediocre. So, where do we go to find the truth, the right data, the accurate information?

Well, the answer is, to church, of course, with all the tools that are available through that resource - becoming involved in church activities where the fellowship feeds our souls, reading the Bible, participating in a Bible study group.

Now, there's a nerdy thing to do, eh? Well, if that's what you think, you are in for a great awakening. The Bible requires thought and good teaching to be understood. It's not for the squeamish, not for the wimp. There are great and wonderful truths to be learned if we are to know our Saviour.

Becoming involved in a church exposes us to some marvelous, like-minded people, people who recognize just how important **our** life's journey is. It is here where we will form some wonderful friendships with people who are on the same journey as we are. We don't want to miss out!

Yes, there are those who will show us the way. We, however, must do our part and listen to what they say. Try to understand what joy God can bring to our lives.

If you give Him the chance, He promises that we will find fulfillment beyond our wildest dreams.

Matthew 6:34 suggests, "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes."

God could make you listen – but He won't. Like the painting called, 'The Light of the World,' in St. Paul's Cathedral, Christ will knock, but you must be the one to answer.

Remember the poem, 'Footprints in the Sand,'? He will carry you when you can't do it yourself. Finding your way may seem to be an arduous journey, but Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians 7:14-16 teaches this: "And now, isn't it wonderful all the ways in which this distress has goaded you closer to God? You're more alive, more concerned, more sensitive, more relevant, more human, more passionate, more responsible. Looked at it from any angle, you've come out of this with purity of heart. And that is what I was hoping for in the first place, when I wrote the letter."

In our scripture reading from Jeremiah 29:13-14 we heard this wonderful statement: " When you come looking for me, you'll find me. Yes, when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else, I'll make sure that you won't be disappointed. I'll turn things around for you."

Friends, God is not hiding. He will always speak to those who are willing to take the time to listen. AMEN