**Walk Out Your Front Door – By Thailer Jimerson**

Amber and I have taken up the practice of meditating on the scripture that will serve as the basis of the week’s upcoming sermon. I plan to preach on Mark 2.13-17 as the next text where we’ll be asking the question *What does it mean to eat with “tax collectors and sinners”?* What does it mean to seek the sick, to help the hurting?

This is an important question if we’re to really obey the example of Jesus.

Driving to work one morning, I decided to do that rare thing where I limit my input. I stopped the audiobooks, turned off the podcasts, didn’t open up Spotify – and I just thought. I gave myself permission to be bored and think. While sitting there in the Burger King drive-through, I mulled over a growing anxiety: *Why don’t I hunger for God?* It’s like Piper’s book title was a summary of my spiritual life: *When I Don’t Desire God*. Why couldn’t I have that powerful devotional life like before when I woke up early, read my Bible, and waited for the Spirit to zap me with his spiritual ray gun? I was ashamed to think just how far my devotional feelings have fallen. Where was that hot zest from the early days of my walk with Christ where I would stop on every single sentence of scripture and just marvel?

 I began to have this sneaking suspicion that God was withholding the goods I so desperately sought - in isolated study - with him *on purpose*, for my own good. I thought maybe he had supplied it before in isolation because I was young and growing, but now - because he knows I lean dangerously over this cliff of private piety, having a penchant for isolated study, being the introverted-antisocial-hermit-recluse I am - he says in response “Now, get out there and find me in the midst of community.”

 I called Amber.

 I related to her this struggle and how my mind drifted to those very recent instances where the door would crack open and I would see the Spirit showing through – meeting with a brother who preaches elsewhere, the convicting discussions I had with my wife a Saturday prior, my youth group meetings on Sunday night.

 What I began to realize was that the crucial difference was that I was finding God in community, not in isolation. She agreed and pointed my attention in the direction of some extremely relevant quotes:

 “There is no knowing God or humankind without knowing Jesus, and there is no knowing Jesus without knowing humankind and God.”

 “There is no relation to other human being without a relation to God and vice versa.”

 “The church is the church only when it is there for others.”

The Bible agrees with this. **First John 4.20** states “If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar, for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen is not able to love God whom he has not seen. And this is the commandment we have from him: that the one who loves God should love his brother also” and then there’s **1 John 4.12** which states that we, to some degree, experience God when we experience others in love “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God resides in us and his love is perfected in us.”

 Connection. Connecting with others is the point. What my wife calls “networking”. I could avoid it before by sweeping it away as something that *she* does in order to promote some platform, but I can’t do that anymore – because that’s the way of life for a Christian. You have to touch base, reach out, have real conversations. I think this came home to me, like when you forget you left the stove on, as I remembered those times I’ve not reached out after someone’s death. Yes, I’ve done that before – even as a preacher. I mean, yeah, I always go to the funeral – but calling someone, meeting with them to pray, fuhgeddaboutit.

 Connecting with others makes us more human. Maybe you’re like me. (Heaven knows it’s a lot easier with the advent of Netflix, Amazon, UberEATS, and all sorts of grocers delivering now.) You never have to walk out the door. But you should. Work at Starbucks. Make calls. Attend things. Leave the house. Even make a connection on social media (in small swallows). Find devotional time with others; read with them and pray.