

A Silent Presence

“He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.”

Mark 9:6 (NIV)

I remember when a friend of mine and I were out to a local restaurant for lunch. As we sat waiting for the server to come and take our orders we got into a very funny, noisy conversation. As we laughed and made comments the waitress approached our table, sat down, and asked if she could join the party. We enjoyed her pleasant manner and said, “Why, of course!”

After taking our orders she departed to the kitchen. I looked across the room and saw an elderly couple sitting eating. From time to time throughout our meal I glanced at the couple. I was struck by their complete silence during the meal. They said nothing to each other.

Now it might be argued that they just enjoyed having their partner there and so conversation was not necessary. I know that my wife and I can sit in our living room, each with a book, and not engage in conversation for an hour or so. However, from the blank expressions on their faces, I think that they might have been bored with each other and perhaps life in general.

What a sad state of affairs when two people who live so close to each other seem to be kilometres apart intellectually, socially, and personally.

The context of our verse today describes Peter, James and John on a high mountain with Jesus. Suddenly He becomes radiant and Moses and Elijah appeared with Him discussing His journey in the next few months to Jerusalem and the cross.

Obviously the three disciples had never seen anything like this and they were frightened. Peter spoke up and commented that it was good for the three disciples to be there (a statement of the obvious). What he went on to say (Mark 9:5) was nonsense. Our verse today tells the tale that Peter was merely running on in his speech trying to say something but it did not make any sense.

Sometimes it is really best to remain silent and let the situation work itself out. For example, when visiting someone who suffers, just your presence in the hospital room can mean a lot to the patient. Fluffing the person’s pillow,

drawing the blinds so the sun is not shining in their eyes, or other comforting activity can mean more than anything you say.

The elderly couple I saw in the restaurant may have been very happy just to be with the other person, I do not know. However, if we can draw near to Jesus and quietly wait in His presence through prayer, worship on Sunday, or reading the Gospels, we shall find comfort beyond description. Jesus’ silent presence is worth more than a thousand sermons.

It is the presence of Jesus and not the absence of problems that makes life bearable. So, quietly wait for the Lord to draw near. Gerhard Terstegen wrote the following and these words may be a good prayer for you today:

Be daily dearer to my heart,
And ever let me feel Thee near;
Then willingly with all I’d part,
Nor count it worthy of a tear.

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