

### **Is Your Life Your Own?**

**Jesus welcomed back his disciples from their first mission trip, on which he had sent them. They had been preaching, teaching, chasing away evil spirits. They had been healing in his name. Power had gone out of them all the time, a power they never expected in themselves. They were very excited about it, and wanted to talk about it.**

**But it had tired them. Yet even while they were giving their reports they were interrupted by dozens of people who wanted to see them, who wanted to be touched, who wanted attention drawn to their sick children. They did not even have time for a bite, for a drink, they were eaten alive, it seemed, by the demands of others.<sup>1</sup>**

**Jesus understood their plight and said, “Let’s get out of here, you need rest, you need some time for yourselves alone.” So he organized a boat and a skipper and off they went to seek a little solitude. But what did they find? More crowds! “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd . . . So he began teaching them many things.” How could Jesus do this, wasn’t he tired too? It says he had compassion on the crowds. We also know that He knew who he was, where he was going, and what he was to do.**

**One of the dearest myths of America is the myth of the self-made man. It is celebrated throughout our culture and has become the focal point of individualism and ambition. This myth has seeped into the recesses of our souls. Achievement on your own; “I did it my way.”**

**Let’s understand here: Jesus did not abolish ambition. What he did was redirect it away from self to God. He said the one who would be greatest must be servant of all. The ambition is to serve and, firstly, to serve the Lord. This, because God gave us life – our lives are not our own.**

**Recently there has arisen another cultural myth; the myth of the search for the soul; a search for your true self or your own spirituality. The great irony is that Scripture says to find ourselves we must lose ourselves. The basic Christian understanding of life is that God has given life for his purposes, not for self-absorbed contemplation. We are to understand what the Cross means, what God’s call is upon our lives. We do not live solely for ourselves, our jobs, our money, our houses, even for our families! All these things are important and not to be neglected, but they are not our ultimate purpose. We are here to serve God’s purposes. (This means full-time Christian service for church member.) Several years ago I was talking with a friend (Al Vom Steeg, former President of**

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Donders *Beyond Jesus*, 187.

**the MSUM) about mission service. He made a comment that has stuck with me. Speaking of those who wish to truly serve God he said, “Your life is not your own.”**

**Most of us live in a time crunch; I feel it every day around here. So consider this: A Pennsylvania consulting firm has just released one of those studies estimating the amount of time the average American will spend doing various things over the course of a lifetime. The research took more than a year. The results are not encouraging. Consider:**

**Time spent opening junk mail: 8 months.**

**Time spent sitting at stoplights: 6 months.**

**Time spent searching for misplaced objects: 1 year.**

**Time spent trying to return phone calls to people who never seem to be in: 2 years. (Here’s a hint: try email)**

**Time spent doing housework: 4 years (not all bad, housework serves several useful purposes: cleanliness, good order of home and help to family, can also be a time of reflection and prayer, meeting God in the grind.)**

**Time spent standing in line: 5 years.**

**The good news is that the Lord can redeem even the time we consider wasted! Our life is his even when we’re on hold or sitting at stoplights. One of the illusions of life is that the present hour is not the critical, decisive hour. Write it on your heart that this is the day the Lord has made! This is the hour to serve Him.**

**Jesus looked at the crowd and had compassion in his heart because they were “like sheep without a shepherd.” He didn’t see them through the eyes of one who counted his hours and minutes and money (like I so often do), but through the eyes of one who came to seek and to save the lost. Anyone else would have been moved to great irritation. The rushing crowd had completely spoiled the purpose of their trip. The disciples probably exclaimed “Can’t they leave us alone for even one hour?” (I imagine some mothers here feel that at times with their children. Or others who have felt the same at work.) It’s easy to lose patience with people when they get in our way, frustrate our plans, or fail to respond to our wisdom. Someone once said that people are x % protons, x % electrons, x % neutrons, and 90% morons. Aren’t there days when you feel this way?**

**Of course we aren’t Jesus and to set him up as the teacher to emulate would be to simply erect a standard no one can reach. How discouraging and damning. Who can possibly be as compassionate as Jesus? But he is more than a teacher. He is also Savior. When I am born again of the Spirit of God, I know that Jesus did not come to teach only. He came to make you and me what he teaches we should be. Our redemption is his putting into us his own disposition: to be compassionate.**

**When we have days of stress we desperately need to follow Jesus to a lonely place, *with his disciples*, to pray. This is not to escape, but to be equipped. What arises in stressful situations when you've been filled with the Holy Spirit is compassion rather than irritation. Some days you just have to ride on faith, because there is no quiet. But when a pause comes (and it will surely come), make time to be alone with Him. The Holy Spirit applies redemption to living; applied in the subconscious mind where we need power to control the driving urges of *the herd* . . . the longer I live more I realize how much people are driven by the herd instinct and how afraid are people to step out of the herd. Yet Jesus calls you to leave the herd and join His flock, where compassion, not selfish ambition, is the great motivator.**

**Jesus went back to the crowd to heal and convert. His life is not his own, but God's. Notice he takes his ministry to the market place; the work place where people must live out their daily lives. He brings healing, not limited to the physical kind. We can do that too. In truth, your life is not your own either. There is a Spanish language hymn that says "We belong to God, we belong to God."**