

“RESTLESS HEARTS”

Matthew 7:9-12

September 16, 2018

“9 Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:9-11

INTRODUCTION:

**If I were asked what one thing characterizes
the hearts and souls of people in the 21st century -
- I would have to say restlessness.**

You know that feeling.

**Too often, we are just not satisfied
with the way things are going . . .
. . . things are moving too slowly – like the traffic on 62.**

**The grass seems to be greener over there . . .
. . . I need a change of scenery.**

Restlessness.

**It hovers in the corner of our minds . . .
. . . moving around just enough to keep from gathering dust.
It signals that something is not quite right.**

It triggers responses in us –

- we may fidget in our seats when a movie gets boring
- we may tap our foot when things are not moving as fast as we would like.
- we may check our watches

**If we were the younger generation,
we would be texting on our phone.**

All these little habits are symptoms of something much deeper.

We become restless when whatever is currently happening –

- or not happening –
- causes us stress and we yearn to escape or solve the situation.

**In my opinion,
the primary cause of restlessness
is a situation which we *know* is not right.**

We begin to feel like we could be doing something more meaningful.

One response may be as mild as looking through the Want-Ads just to see “what’s out there.”

- another response is the itch and the urge to do something “different” this week-end
- it may be what causes us to plan a vacation to a place we have never been before

**Edgar Allen Poe captured his own restlessness
in his poem, The Raven.**

**“Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak
and weary, Over many a quaint and curious volume of
forgotten lore . . .”**

**How often do you ponder over a
“quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore?”**

**Restlessness – when we recognize it –
- when we come face-to-face with it and name it -
may be a powerful signal from God.**

Here’s what I mean.

SPIRITUAL SIGNAL OF RESTLESSNESS:

**Some theologian once said - and I truly believe this -
- that we are created with a God-shaped hole in our soul
and we spend the rest of our lives
seeking to fill that hole.**

**God loved us enough that when we were created
God gave us the ability to make our own choices -
- even if the choice is to reject God.**

**While that is absolutely true,
a corollary to that is that God also created in us
a yearning for God.**

That’s the God shaped hole.

**God didn’t give us free will and abandon us -
God implanted a “homing beacon” in our souls
that constantly urges us to seek God.**

**In other words,
the farther we stray from God
the more “restless” our souls will become.**

Do you see what I'm trying to say here?

**The restlessness in our souls
just may be a warning signal
that we are on the wrong spiritual course.**

**It was restlessness that led the Prodigal Son into the far country
where he promptly squandered his inheritance.**

**It was restlessness – and starvation –
- that turned his thoughts to home and his eventual return.**

**There are times when the restlessness in our souls
becomes so great that it clouds everything else.**

**The conditions under which we live
become so perilous, so dissatisfying, so threatening
so boring, that we must find relief.**

**Some restlessness is actually a gift from God!
It is meant to set off a homing beacon in our souls -
- it is meant to make us dissatisfied with where we are
and to draw us home.**

**Thomas Edison once said:
Restlessness is discontent - and discontent is the first necessity
of progress. Show me a thoroughly satisfied man and I will
show you a failure.**

**Maybe . . . just maybe . . . God gave hearts
that grow restless when we move away from God.
Maybe a restless heart is the leash that God uses**

to gently - but firmly - keep us from wandering off too far.

Maybe . . . just maybe . . .

If we are restless in our hearts and souls,
maybe God is trying to tell us something.

ANTIDOTE FOR RESTLESSNESS:

One thing I am sure of.

If God implanted this homing beacon within us
that causes us to become restless whenever we are on a course
that would take us farther from God,
then you can be absolutely sure -
- God provides an antidote for restlessness.

In our scripture for this morning, Jesus asked:

“9 Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a
stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If
you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to
your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give
good gifts to those who ask him!”

Jesus used an example that would be familiar to Galileans.
Bread and fish were the staples of the diet in that region.

The giving of bread and fish is a strong symbol
of providing for the needs of the child mentioned.

However, it must be recognized
that this scripture has nothing to do with our giving
something to our children – or anyone else.

God is the subject of this scripture.

And it has everything to do with the way God provides for us.

This scripture follows on the heels of Matthew 7:7-8:

⁷“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Jesus was trying to impress upon those who were listening to Him that God longs to bless us . . .

. . . did you catch that?

God yearns for the opportunity to bless us!

Could it be that God the free will God gave each of us allows us to wander into difficult situations

- honoring our free will -**
- allowing us to make stupid choices**
- and God hopes that will turn to restlessness?**

Could it be that God counts on the restlessness in our souls so that when we tire of it, we will turn to God for healing and comfort?

I believe with all my heart that is exactly how God operates!

Jesus asked the question:

“If your child asked you for bread, would you respond by giving him/her a stone? If your son or daughter asks for a fish, would you give him/her a snake instead?”

Well, of course we wouldn't!

It is exactly the same with God!

God loves us enough to grant us freedom of choice.

**But that does not mean that God has abandoned us!
Left us to fend for ourselves.**

**Instead, God has built in aa safeguard -
- a restlessness in our hearts
that lures us back to God.**

CONCLUSION:

So, here we have a Loving God who seeks to bless us.

**However, too often we misinterpret
how we expect God to bless us.**

**We too often present a list of wants, wishes and desires to God
and then we sit back and wait for God to grant those.**

**There have been times I have prayed for stupid, hungry trout.
I'll admit, when they're not biting I get restless.**

**We pray for things we *think* we want –
- and when those things don't happen
do we get restless waiting for them to happen?**

**We pray for strength and healing –
- and the healing process is too slow –**

**- or it isn't compete
do we get restless?**

**Maybe – just maybe – God is answering our prayers;
just not according to our formula.**

I have said it often -

**- because it may be the single most important thing I can say
to people who have accepted Jesus as their Savior -
- spend time listening to God!**

**If you have doubts,
there is no better place to discuss those than with God!
If you are dissatisfied – tell God about it!**

**Contrary to what you may think,
it is an act of faith to talk to God truthfully!
It is a lack of faith not to.**

**And then . . . listen!
Listen with your heart, with your mind, with your soul.**

**There is a very high probability
that if there is a restlessness in your heart
that God is trying to speak to you -
- God is trying to reach you -
- God is trying to bless you!**

**More than anything you can imagine,
God wants a relationship with each of us.**

**God wants a relationship so badly
that God does not care what we have done in the past.**

God is willing to forgive all of that.

**So, if you have been feeling restless -
- like maybe something is missing in your life.**

**If you've been thinking about offering your skills and talents
to serve God -
- how restless will you feel during the week
- if you don't act on the opportunity to do that?**

**There are many, many places in the Church
you could be serving.
Maybe God is calling you to create a new place to serve.
A new ministry.**

**No matter what you decide . . . know this:
That God loves you more than you can ever imagine.**

**And more than anything, God wants to bless you –
- not for what you did or didn't do
- simply because God loves you.**

**Feeling restless?
God is standing on His front porch
Watching and waiting for you to come home!**

PRAYER:

**Loving God, take our restlessness and turn it into joy and
anticipation. Draw us ever closer to You and remind us – often – how
much we are loved by You. And let our response to that love be
fruitful. Thank you for being there for us. In Jesus' name – AMEN.**