

HIDE AND SEEK



INTRODUCTION

Last Sunday, Peter Murcott shared the message of the Lord's gaze that is always upon us: ***"The eyes of the Lord are towards the righteous and His ears towards their cry."*** Ps 34:15. It reminded me of a minister in South Africa who had a beautiful fruit orchard at his vicarage. He noticed that someone was helping themselves to his fruit without asking. So, he erected a sign in the orchard saying: "The Lord sees you." The next morning, he noticed that fruit was taken again and there was note attached to the sign saying: "I know, but the Lord does not betray me."

In his sermon, Peter explained that knowing that the eyes of the Lord are always upon us, we gain grate fortitude and strength to carry out the Lord's commands. It also drives out fear and enables us to endure any form of persecution or trial. The reason for this is that we are serving the only True, Living and Almighty God, the Creator of all, and when His eyes and ears are towards us, we have the presence and power of the Lord with us.

The question now is, how do we respond to the eyes of the Lord that are towards us?

HIDE AND SEEK

One of my favourite childhood games was hide and seek. We usually played it at Christmas time (summer in South Africa) when all the cousins came to visit, and it would keep us busy for hours on end. It was amazing to see how some could almost disappear and one would only find them when they made a slight movement or a sound. There was also a great sense of anticipation when you are hiding and you see the "seeker" getting closer and closer to your hiding place.

Just as we played hide and seek, our response to the Lord's eyes that are towards us, must be to seek the Lord. In the Word, we are encouraged to seek the Lord. But unlike the objective of the game, the Lord is not in hiding and wants to be found when we seek Him. Paul explained this to the Greeks in Athens: ***"...they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way towards Him and find Him. Yet He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being"*** Acts 17:27.

When one does a word search, one is amazed to find how many times the word “seek” is used in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word that is translated as “seek” in our Bible means:

- To resort to;
- To seek with care;
- To enquire;
- To require; and
- To consult.

In short, to seek the Lord is to be in a living relationship and dialogue with the Lord. In every aspect of our life, we must seek the Lord with care, resort to Him, enquire from Him, require from Him and consult with Him. King David clearly understood the importance of seeking the Lord. Here are a few examples from the Psalms:

Ps 34:4	“I sought the Lord and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears”
Ps 34:10	“The young lion suffers want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing”
Ps 105:4	“Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His presence continually”
Ps 24:5-6	“He shall receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.”
Ps 27:8	“You have said: “Seek my face.” My heart says to You: “Your face, Lord, do I seek””
Ps 119:2	“Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek Him with their whole heart”
Ps 69:30, 32	“I will praise the name of God with a song, I will magnify Him with thanksgiving...When the humble see it they will be glad, you who seek God, let your hearts revive.”
Ps 141:8	“But my eyes are towards you, O God, my Lord; in you I seek refuge”
Ps 14:2	“The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.”

The message from King David to seek the Lord is also recorded in 1 Chronicles 16: ***“Glory in His holy name, let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice! Seek the Lord and His strength, seek his presence continually!”*** The message continued with King Solomon, the son of King David. In 2 Chronicles 7 there is a vivid recording of the consecration of the temple built by King Solomon. After the consecration, the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: ***“I have heard your prayer and chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes are open and My ears are attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.”*** vs 12 – 16.

Jesus also used the word “seek” in His sermons. As an example, in His sermon about anxiety caused by our focus on material things, He said: ***“Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*** Mat 6:33. Another example is His sermon to ask the Father for what need, which is often taken out of context for what we want rather than what we need: ***“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”*** Mat 7:7.

HOW DO WE SEEK THE LORD?

The key to seeking and finding the Lord, is to do it wholeheartedly. In Jeremiah 30:15 we read: ***“You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart.”*** This lines up perfectly with Jesus’ summary of the first commandment: love the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength.

It is probably one of biggest challenges given our own weak flesh, the world we live in and the Evil One’s attempts to distract and divert our attention. There is a danger that we seek the Lord only selectively and only when it suits us. We are often too self-sufficient and “independent”. Subconsciously, we may have an attitude of: “Lord, I have all in hand and will come to You just when I cannot figure things out myself or when things go wrong.”

This approach is not acceptable to the Lord. The Lord expects an “all in” approach in each and every aspect of our lives. When we are experiencing a lack of answers, blessings and guidance from the Lord, one of the reasons could be that we are not “all in”. We should ask the Lord and others who we trust to show us aspects of our lives where we are not “all in” yet. If we find these areas, we must confess it to the Lord, repent (i.e. turn 180 degrees from it) and ask the Holy Spirit to help in the change that is needed in that aspect of our life.

Remember that seeking the Lord is to resort to, seek with care, enquire, require and consult with the Lord. To seek and to be seeking is a verb and it is an action. We do this through prayer, reading the Word, listening to the Holy Spirit and engaging with other believers (i.e. the church). This applies to every aspect of our lives, from the smallest to the largest.

It starts each day when we seek the Lord in our personal morning prayer. Sometimes it may simply be a flash prayer, other times spending much more time in the Word, prayer and meditation. Slowly but surely our minds, our thinking, our habits and our doing will change and seeking the Lord in all will become our new nature. It is what King David meant with ***“Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His presence continually!”***. It is indeed how we walk the path of sanctification and holiness – in the presence of God through the Holy Spirit that dwells within us.

Most importantly, our action to seek the Lord should be coming from a place of “want to” rather than by compulsion. When seeking the Lord is a desire driven by love and thankfulness for what the Lord has done for us, it will become a way of life rather than something that the Bible says we must do.

SEEK WHILE THERE IS TIME

Brothers and sisters, there will come a time for each person when it is too late to seek the Lord. In our reading from Isaiah, we are encouraged to seek the Lord **while** He may be found. This is the message we must share where we are on the Isle of Man. It is even more relevant now when so many say that there is no God. The Psalms even talk about it: ***“In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek Him, all his thoughts are: “There is no God””*** Ps 10:4. As Peter Murcott encouraged us to start our messages with four powerful words: “Thus says the Lord”, we must say with love: ***“Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, let him turn to the Lord, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”*** Isaiah 55:6

It is the wonderful message of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ as we read in the Gospel reading from John this morning: ***“Jesus said to them: “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst...For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks for the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”*** John 6:35, 40.

AMEN

Collect (Prayer before the readings): Almighty God, Who sent Your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of Your church, open our hearts to the riches of Your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; through Jesus Christ your son and Lord, Who is alive and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Readings: Old Testament: Isaiah 55:1 - 9
New Testament: Acts 17:22 - 34
Gospel: John 6:22 - 40

Hymns:

1. 202 (Common Praise): Holy, Holy, Holy
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNrbDR8TxYI>
2. 1003 (Mission Praise): My Jesus, my Saviour
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGmZcTCXjmM>
3. 261 (Mission Praise): I am the bread of life
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfM32D2pYbs>
4. 1008 (Mission Praise): The Lord is my Shephard
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkX0MG0>