

**Streams of Living Water**  
The Contemplative Stream  
September 8, 2019

Texts to be read: Psalm 131:1-2 Matthew 6:5-9 James 5:13-16 Nehemiah 1:4-11

To contemplate means to meditate or to ponder deeply. Contemplatives seek to know Jesus deeply through the avenues of prayer, meditation and spiritual reading.

Prayer threaded its way through Jesus' life:

- ❖ Jesus was baptized as he was praying (Luke 3:21)
- ❖ Before choosing the Twelve disciples he spent the night in prayer (Luke 6:12)
- ❖ After an exhausting evening of healing he went to a deserted place to pray early the next morning (Mark 1:35)
- ❖ Jesus took Peter, James and John up on the mountain to pray and it led to the Transfiguration experience (Luke 9:28-29)
- ❖ Jesus prayed with intensity, even sweating drops of blood, in the Garden of Gethsemane before giving himself as a sacrifice on the cross (Luke 22:39-44)

Like Jesus, we all need times of solitude and communion with God. The contemplative tradition provides one proven way to follow our Lord's example, both privately and in company with the community of faith. Nothing is more striking in Jesus' life than his intimacy with the Father.

The contemplative tradition helps to make Christianity a deeply personal matter, cultivating times of solitude and silence with God away from the persistent and raucous invasion of modern media. It cultivates the daily disciplines of scripture reading and prayer, fanning the flames of intimacy with God.

Taken too far, or exercised with neglect of other traditions, the contemplative life can diminish the communal aspects of Christian faith or lead to an unhealthy asceticism. It may also devalue or neglect intellectual efforts to articulate our Christian faith. Thus, it must be balanced by emphasis on the other five streams of renewal we will study over the next five weeks.

Some of the current tensions in churches across our country are exacerbated by a lack of appreciation for the strengths which each of these streams bring. I would like to see Zion Mennonite Church strive for the spiritual renewal that comes from a balance of emphasis on all six of the streams.

**Questions to ponder:**

- 1) What stands out to you as you read the four Scriptures listed above?
- 2) How can we learn to develop intimacy with God even while we go about our duties?  
How can we abide in God's presence with attentiveness?
- 3) How might our ministry to others be enhanced by what we receive for ourselves during times of withdrawal from others for the sake of prayer?