

True Vacation: A Meditation

Time is a precious commodity. It can be used to earn money or for the pursuit of knowledge, the cultivation of friends, the enjoyment of pleasure. The Christian wants to use his time to please his Lord. He knows that his time is not his own, but belongs to the Lord. We are stewards of time.

Time must be used wisely. Does this then exclude vacation time? Not at all! Doctors tell us that many physical illnesses and problems caused by tension and nerves can best be cured by a rest from normal, ordinary, everyday activities. We need a change of routine to help us restore our bodies, minds and souls. To get the needed rest we go on a vacation. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines the latter as "a period of several days or weeks spent away from work and school etc., used especially for recreation and travel." We take vacations for granted, but our working forefathers never had them. The 18th century social movement fought for an eight-hour day, later followed by regular paid vacations. We are a privileged lot compared to the past.

During a vacation people want to get away from the noise, the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Our times are so rushed. Modern technology has given us time saving gadgets, but many still say they are busier than ever. And home entertainment centres, telephone, the Internet, radio and television don't give much rest either. Ours is a restless and noisy age. Someone's ghetto blaster may disturb a quiet evening at the beach. The waves, the wind, and the sounds of animals can no longer be heard. Even a vacation may not give a person a chance to get himself collected.

Vacation. I am thinking of our holiday in Nova Scotia. A time to hear the birds sing, the powerful breakers of waves beating the rocks on the ocean shore, a tidal bore making its way up the river, to see beautiful flowers, fruit orchards, and whales playing in the sea. Vacation. A time to see God displaying His power and majesty in His creation. A time to be silent before Him. The celebration of the existence of eternity within historical time.

Many centuries ago there was a man who knew the secret of a true vacation. He wrote a psalm, the 62nd. And he began his poem with these remarkable words, "For God alone my soul waits in silence; from Him comes my salvation" (The amplified Old Testament). The poet's life was difficult. He faced dangerous enemies. As he thinks about his overwhelming needs, he begins to meditate upon God and finds peace. "The thoughtful soul to solitude retires," said a poet of quieter times.

Martin Luther once wrote, "Bear and forbears, and silent be, Tell to no man thy misery; Yield not in trouble to dismay, God can deliver any day." Like the author of Psalm 62, Martin Luther found composure in his solitude with God. Hence a vacation is more than traveling and sightseeing. A true vacation includes seeking God in solitude, and finding peace and rest in Him.

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