

Under the Juniper Tree

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Scriptures:

Joshua 1:8
I Kings 19:1-8
Psalm 119:97;148



Where is your favourite place to retreat from the worries and tumult of our worldly existence? Do you have a favourite place? What I am doing right now is one of my favourite places to seek God and still my mind, in the quietness of the night, sitting in my chair, with just the soft lamp light and the clock ticking in the background. It is often here that I feel closest to God, more attuned to His voice and His manifest presence. Somehow more able to follow His command to meditate upon His word that I might know Him more fully and see Him more clearly. But our places of retreat and reflection are not for us to rest in permanently, their purpose is for refreshment, nourishment and strength to carry out the plan God has for our time here on earth.

When Elijah received the message from Jezebel that she planned to avenge his actions in killing her priests of Baal, by killing him, he fled, as fast as he could. When he could run no further, he found shade and rest under a juniper tree, where he cried out to God that he could take no more, he asked God to take his life, he had had enough. Elijah knew that this world was not his home, just as it is not our eternal home, we are strangers in this land, like Elijah, we do not fit into the world's way of living. So, sitting under the juniper tree, he eventually fell into an exhausted sleep.

What God did next is such a clear image of what our times under our juniper trees are for. God sent an angel to wake Elijah, providing food and drink for him, then allowing Elijah to fall back asleep until the angel woke him a second time, telling him to get up, eat and drink as the journey ahead of him was so great. This place of refuge was there to prepare Elijah for what God knew he needed to accomplish, no matter how much he may have preferred to have stayed there.

In Psalm 119, we hear the writer saying how much he loves meditating on God's law in the day as well as in the watches of the night. These are precious times that God knows we all need but not for some form of self gratification, or blind obedience, or even to look pious enough. God has work planned for each of us to do, not to earn our salvation or the praise of our fellows, but to glorify Him and bring honour to Him alone. And the only way we will know what these plans are, and have the strength to fulfil this work, is by taking the time to be refreshed and nourished through seeking God and knowing Him more fully. We need the spiritual sustenance that only comes from earnestly seeking Him.

Whether we like it or not, our journey on earth will be a series of ups and downs, of rocky paths and mountains that tower over us, mocking us with their steepness that seems so impossible to traverse. We will need the shade of the juniper tree, the heavenly food and drink, as well as the comfort of the loving

arms of our Saviour lifting us up onto our feet and then climbing the mountain with us. We have the assurance that we will never have to navigate this journey alone, yet so often the circumstances overwhelm us, the journey looks too great and we forget Who is walking with us. The more we immerse ourselves in learning how to recognise when this begins, the more we will develop the ability to immediately seek the nourishment we need in the Word of God Himself.

Times of meditation when we wait upon God, seeking to draw closer to Him, feeding upon Him, are precious treasures. Take the time to rest under your juniper tree, then be prepared for whatever work God gives you to do, giving all the glory and honour to Him, exalting Him for His grace and favour upon your life.

Prayer: Abba Father, as we feed upon You, may we learn more fully what our place of refuge is for and how to live in the abundance of Your strength and nourishment we need to accomplish what You have planned for us. In Jesus' Name we pray Amen