

Devotion, Week of September 24, 2023

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

Matthew Kelly, author of “Holy Moments,” says that “we live in a world drowning in information and desperate for wisdom.... It’s time to move from distraction to focus.” I’m reminded of seeing a couple eating dinner together in the formal dining room on our recent cruise and never speaking to each other. The whole time they were on their cell phones texting. We joked that maybe the only way they could communicate was to text each other! You’ve all seen people doing that in restaurants – children who play with video games and phones during the meal, parents who keep checking their texts – what I call total insanity. What’s the point of going out to enjoy a meal together if you can’t even communicate with each other?

We are inundated with “stuff” on our cell phones, ipads, and laptops. Ads interrupt everything we try to search for, unless we have a sophisticated ad blocker. We get spam and junk emails and texts all the time. If we were constantly getting information that was actually pertinent, that would be one thing – we could prioritize and perhaps deal with it. But we spend way too much time deleting or sending stuff to spam folders. It distracts us, it keeps us from focusing on the real tasks we have before us, it keeps us from having time to communicate personally (and I mean actual TALKING) to others, and it keeps us from learning wisdom.

Wisdom requires a time of sabbath rest and reflection. It requires thinking about what we’ve learned recently that is going to help us live faithfully and with purpose. How do our children learn wisdom from a video game? How do we learn to sit with someone in the hospital who is very ill if all we do is text others on a cell phone? How do we learn to be patient and listen? We don’t. We have to put the electronics down and pay attention to the rest of the world around us – because that’s the part of our world that matters. I get automatic email responses from some ministers now that say that they are taking their sabbath day and will answer emails the next day. I wonder what would happen if we did the same? The automatic response might be, “Today is my sabbath and I will respond to you tomorrow.” It might be a nice piece of evangelism!

Jeanne