

FEBRUARY 4, 2025 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

I almost would say no homily needed because the readings speak for themselves that Jesus is God, he can heal and he can raise from the dead. But one thing I would like to touch on, and Jesus strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat, but tell no one--tell no one about it, and it's kind of strange. You have this commotion, a great miracle happened, and Jesus says, "Tell no one." And I know that many of the scholars have spent much time on this, why he would say that, but in my mind, it's actually very simple.

The more we know God is at work very much, and the more we know that God is at work, the less attention we want. And so, Jesus doesn't want that attention. The world wants attention, and that's why we see how so many of the great entertainment heroes, their lives get so messed up because they take it all in and they think that they're great. But if we know--if we're from God, and we know that God is at work, it's not about us, it's not about me, it's always about God.

And so, to know this is about God, we're also on that journey to God, which can be bumpy in our spiritual life. And the psalm in between, Psalm 22 is such a profound psalm. I always--it really stirs my heart because, of course, today, it was just the praising of God. But Psalm 22, we often forget, it starts with, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The words of Jesus on the cross, as we find in Mark 15 and Matthew 27.

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" But Psalm 22 is such a beautiful psalm because it goes from pure desperation into praise, into trust. "I will proclaim your name in the assembly" and nobody is going to stop me. "Although I don't feel God, "does not mean that I don't believe in God." And this is where sometimes people get caught, and

they come for spiritual direction and they say, "I absolutely have no feeling of God, no feeling of God," and that can be, but it can have different causes.

And Saint Ignatius of Loyola speaks about it in his spiritual exercises. When someone has no feeling of God, it can be that they're being pulled into the world. They become more self-centred and they want more for themselves, and their prayer life dwindles away. And that can be one of the reasons that there's no sense of God anymore, that they're kind of lonely. It also can be that God is testing someone, and God withdraws himself. It feels like...

It's not that God withdraws himself, but it feels like God withdraws himself, and then, we kind of feel very lonely. We kind of feel lonely. It is like a little child, a five-year-old Johnny, who has to go to school and gets dropped off. There's a lot of drama, but he has to learn to trust that Mommy is still there when he comes out of school. So, he can feel withdrawn from God, withdrawn from his mother, but the mother is still there, and this can very much happen in our prayer life, too.

It's not uncommon that I'm with someone and this is happening, and God is kind of testing us. God does not want little children who always need the milk. God wants grown, spiritually mature people. And so, this can be one of the reasons why God withdraws himself, but God will be back. Just like the child, when he goes to kindergarten, Mommy will be there after school. The third reason that God withdraws, that the feeling of God not being there, can be literally the dark night of the soul stuff.

Teresa of Calcutta is such a beautiful example of it and well-documented. For about 25 years or more, she had absolutely no sense of God. She did adoration every day, one-hour adoration and her prayers. She had a deep prayer life, but absolute blank darkness, nothing. And

God-- but in the meantime, God is at work. God, of course, her missionary sisters grew by leaps and bounds while this was happening, but Teresa of Calcutta felt nothing.

And this kind of, again, is a way of God, of course, to keep her humble, to know that everything relies on God, and this is for us to realize that everything belongs to God. Everything I have belongs to God and may we all be used as instruments for God as we run the race, as in the first reading of Hebrews, we run the race and we keep our eyes fixed on God, no matter what happens, and we will receive a reward at our last breath. Amen.