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*Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end. (Psalm 119:111-112)*

“Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.” // Discipleship; we have all heard the word, it is a church word to be sure, and it is a word that I believe causes a great deal of confusion and anxiety for modern Christians. While I was home this past week, I was given a book by my brother entitled, *Finding Sanctuary* by Christopher Jamison, a Benedictine Monk and Abbot living at the Worth Abbey in England with his brothers. The idea for this book came to Fr. Jamison after the television series *The Monastery* was created there at Worth Abbey for the BBC back in 2005. *The Monastery* was a reality series that took five average men from their daily lives and asked them to live as monks for 40 days and 40 nights. I guess it made for riveting television because it became a hit with viewers and critics alike. As for the five men and the monks of Worth Abbey, well their lives were changed forever.†

A couple of weeks ago I had a meeting with my spiritual director and I was sharing with him some of the hard struggles that I am dealing with in my own life and I said to him, “Rick, I understand here in my head what I am to do, I get it intellectually, I just don’t get it here in my heart.” Rick looked at me and he said, sort of in jest, “It’s called discipleship.” // Yes, discipleship, there is that word.

“Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.” // Like the five men who went into the Worth Abbey for 40 days and 40 nights, you and I are all fully defined by modern culture, we are over worked, over busy, and over stimulated consumers. Jamison describes this quite well in his book

...this consumer-driven outlook [he argues] is dependent on some hidden assumptions: first, the assumption that there is an infinite supply of goods coming from an infinite production line. The second assumption is that the consumer will have to engage in endless productive work in order to earn enough money to fund the endless consumption.... While theoretically the consumer can say, "I've had enough," and stop consuming, in fact the market works hard to make sure the consumer never says that.... You are a free person [he says] and you can choose how busy you want to be. Freely choosing to resist the urge to busyness is the frame of mind you need before you can take steps toward finding sanctuary.<sup>ii</sup>

The pathway to true discipleship begins when we choose to take those steps toward finding sanctuary for ourselves and others. Discipleship doesn't simply happen in the head, it is not a matter of intellectual assent. Discipleship takes place in the heart and cultivating that takes a lifetime of attention. We can see how we are doing by asking a simple question of ourselves, "Who sets our agenda? That is a powerful question and I urge you not only to think it through carefully, but I urge you to bring this question to God in prayer asking for his illumination. As you pray you will discover that your agenda is not set by other people and it isn't set by you; it is set by God. Life becomes the search for God's agenda in your life. When you discover that agenda, you have discovered your true self, and you have found the ultimate freedom through obedience. False expectations that you either put on yourself or ones that others put on you no longer have the power they once did and living faithfully is no longer simply a compartment of your life that causes guilt and heartache. To find this agenda is the work of a lifetime and it cannot be done alone. To do it, you and I must stay in the sanctuary and not give up when the bad times come as they inevitably will. We must rely on God and one another to bring us through to new realizations and new perspectives, to peace and joy.<sup>iii</sup> The Psalmist understood this as he sought to stay so earnestly in the sanctuary provided to him by God

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances. I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word. Accept my offerings of praise, O LORD, and teach me your ordinances. I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law. The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts. Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

In Jesus Name; Amen.

- <sup>i</sup> Christopher Jamison, *Finding Sanctuary* Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 2006, pp. 1-3
- <sup>ii</sup> Ibid. pp. 17.
- <sup>iii</sup> Ibid. pp. 88-89