

Episode 102

After the usual readings from the books of Moses and the prophets, those in charge of the service sent them this message: "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, come and give it."

- Acts 13.15

I discovered recently that the American state of Colorado is well known for its vivid landscape of mountains, forests, canyons, and rivers. However, along with the breathtaking terrain comes the relentless threat of mountain lions, particularly for the many horse ranches.

Many horses in Colorado spend their nights terrorised by the smells and threatening sounds that surround them in the dark, to the point that the horses can often be out of control by morning, needing lengthy groundwork and attention to get them settled and calm once again. However, something one of the 'horse whisperers' said caught my attention. Apparently, they can tell that the horse is doing better when there is no longer tension in the reins and the horse gives off what is best described as a sigh - a deep breath and release, that signals that peace has been restored.

What a picture of the daily rhythms we need in our lives. Our enemy the devil is always around, prowling like a lion roaring for its prey. We are then reminded in The Message to keep our guard up. We're not the only ones plunged into these hard times. It's the same with Christians all over the world. So keep a firm grip on the faith. The suffering won't last forever. It won't be long before this generous God of ours will have you put together and on your feet again.

The truth is, we need groundwork too, every day for that matter. We need time in God's presence until the tension is released and we feel we can breathe again. No wonder we feel like we've experienced trauma if we just keep standing guard, and never let down our guard and let the breath of God renew and restore us.

So the leaders of the synagogue, knowing the trying times their people were going through, fully aware of the oppression and persecution they were experiencing under Roman rule, turned to Paul and Barnabas and asked if they have any word of encouragement. What an example of good leadership.

Father, if you have any word of encouragement for us, come and give it, so that the peace of God that surpasses all understanding can guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

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