

Preacher: Pastor Twyla

Scripture: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴ As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things.

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. ⁵⁴ When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him ⁵⁵ and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶ And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

A few years ago, a therapist named David Slagle, received a call from a young woman in his department at work who said her car had broken down and left her stranded about two miles from the office. So, he drove over there and found her leaning against her car, looking flustered. He asked her what happened.

She said, "Well, I was just driving down the road, and the car quit running."

"Could you be out of gas?" he asked.

"No, I just filled it up."

Well, that one question pretty much exhausted his automotive diagnostic abilities, but he persisted. "What happened? Did it make any noise?"

"Oh yeah," she replied. "As I was driving down the hill, it went brump, brump, brump, POW!"

He asked, "When was the last time you changed the oil?"

She said, "Oil?" As it turned out, she had owned the car for a year and a half and had never changed the oil.

He writes that he gets the same look when he asks frazzled friends, "When was the last time you took a Sabbath rest?"

When was the last time you took a Sabbath rest? In ministerial protocol, it is recommended that pastors take a Sabbath rest every seven years. The only one I ever had was when I was serving at the Westminster church of the Brethren, so that would have to be over 12 years ago. My next one would have been due while I was working at Fahrney Keedy, and Fahrney Keedy was not recognizing any of the pastoral benefits the denomination suggests to congregations for their pastors. And for various reasons, I've not sought one since I left Fahrney Keedy. I'm not asking for or wanting one now. I'm just trying to illustrate that the denomination, and likely other denominations recognize that everyone, including pastors, needs time for rest and renewal.

We hear this same thing in today's text. In verse 31, it says that Jesus took his disciples with him for a time of rest. If we read what happened before this moment, we learn that the disciples had been quite busy. After Jesus was rejected by the people in his own hometown, he went from community to community teaching the God's Word. The disciples followed along,

probably helped as they were able, learned more of Jesus' teachings and observed the many miracles he performed.

The time eventually came when Jesus decided that they needed to venture out to do some of the work he was doing. So, we read in verses 7-13: "He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff: no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, 9 but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. 10 He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 11 If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." 12 So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. 13 They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them."

We pick up the story in today's text where the disciples returned to Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught. I imagine that telling was filled with excitement. But Jesus also saw the exhaustion in them. The bible tells us that the disciples didn't even have time to eat because they were so busy. That should not surprise us. As you heard from the verses I read to you, they did amazing things, like Jesus did, so why wouldn't people seek them out for help, just as they did with Jesus. Recognizing the needs of his disciples, Jesus invites them to go with him to a quiet place to get some rest.

Interestingly, on Wednesday of this week, Chris Tiegreen, author of my daily devotional, "At His Feet", wrote a devotion on rest from Mark 6:31. His devotions do not follow the lectionary, so I always find it interesting, maybe a God moment, when one does pop up focused on the lectionary text that I use. I want to quote something he said that stood out to me.

"It is in the quiet places that Jesus refreshes us. Burnout is a common problem in whatever field you work, and the world has no lasting solution for it. Secular advice tells us to get away for a change of pace. If we follow that advice, we can postpone burnout for a time; but we quickly get tired again if all we've done is relax. Jesus did not tell his disciples to go away to relax. He told them to come with him. His presence is the difference between a temporary rest and a lasting refreshment.

In the quiet places, Jesus does give us rest, but he also teaches us how to depend on him more fully, how to serve him more effectively, and how to trust him more implicitly. The quiet places are places of growth. We deepen our fellowship with him, and instead of a temporary rest, we have a relationship that will continue to sustain us when the pressures of life are on us again. The things we learn in the calm with him today are things that will help us survive the storms ahead."

These words really made sense to me. Whether we are employed, students, or retired we need to find rest not only for our bodies, but also for our souls. Jesus invites us to do this as he says, "Come WITH ME to a quiet place and get some rest."

When I was planning the preaching themes for July, my initial thinking for this sermon led me to title the sermon, "When Plans Get Derailed." I was probably thinking this direction because there seems to be an interruption in Jesus' plan for the disciples to get some rest. We read that the disciples and Jesus got in a boat and set out for a solitary place, but the crowds followed from shore, running from town to town and greeted them when Jesus and the disciples landed on shore. In the following verses we read the story about the feeding of the 5,000. It sounds like Jesus' plan for his disciples got derailed, but did it?

We don't know exactly how long they were out on the boat, but being out on that boat may have been the only quiet place they could find. Even as they were sailing, people followed

along the shoreline, but the water gave Jesus and the disciples a bit of a shield from the people. Maybe it was there that they found some rest. They were in a boat with Jesus. It doesn't say he was sleeping or that there was a storm in this story, it just may have been a place to ride the waves in a boat, rest, and talk with each other and Jesus.

Pondering this, I thought to myself, rest is important to find not only through large amounts of time, like when we take vacations, but also in short spurts of time.

A father had three very active boys. One summer evening, he was playing cops and robbers tag with his boys in the back yard after dinner. One of the boys tagged his father and yelled, "I got you!"

The father slumped to the ground and when he didn't get up right away, a neighbor ran over to see if he had been hurt in the fall. When the neighbor bent over, the overworked father opened one eye and said, "Shhh. Don't give me away. It's the only chance I've had to rest all day."

Jesus doesn't want us to wait for vacations to come along to get the rest, of body and soul, we all need. We need to find those short moments of rest too. Those short times of rest, with Jesus, are every bit as valuable to our spiritual and physical wellbeing.

I think that without even those shorter moments of rest, we become more vulnerable to drifting away from Jesus and his will for our lives. We become more susceptible to burnout and to selfishness, because in losing our tight connection with Jesus, we lose connection with our call to commitment to fulfilling the purposes for which God created us.

Imagine what it would have been like for the disciples if they would have been greeted immediately by the feeding of the 5,000-plus people after their return to Jesus from their mission trips. Talk about exhaustion and burnout, wow! That little break, the rest to rejoice in what they accomplished on their mission trips and to hear the positive feedback they likely received from Jesus, and time to rest their bodies may have been enough to prepare them for what came next. We need those times too as we seek to be faithful to the ministry that we are called to fulfill, even the unexpected ones like the feeding of the 5,000.

After the feeding of the 5,000-plus, Jesus sent them out ahead of him on a boat again, telling them to sail to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowds. Again, they got some moments away to reflect on what happened and to rest. Jesus then found some moments to get away on his own to pray before joining his disciples to get away with them. It's then that we read the story about Jesus walking on the water, but that is a story for another time. When those shorter opportunities arise, do we take Jesus up on his call to go with him to a quiet place to rest? Do we look for opportunities to rest with Jesus, or do we fill up those potential moments with other stuff to gratify ourselves.

Chris Tiegreen writes, "The times Jesus had alone with His Father strengthened him and guided him for his mission in the world. In the same way, we generally cannot experience the presence of Christ in the busyness of life unless we have first experienced his presence in the quiet moments. We cannot get to know him better when the shrill voices of our duties compete with his gentle leading. If we want to serve him well, we need his sane, calm voice to speak clearly to us. And the only way to cultivate our hearing is in quiet places," and I would add for clarity, with Jesus.

Vance Havner wrote, "Jesus knows we must come apart and rest awhile, or else we may just plain come apart." Jesus says to you my friends, come with me to a quiet place, and we will rest together. May it be so. Amen.