

Refreshed and Renewed

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

(preached July 21, 2024)

Work, Work, Work! Sometimes it seems that our whole lives are filled with work. Can we never get a break? Must we be constantly “on call” to help others; to solve problems; to heal the sick; to cure society’s ills!

In today’s reading from Mark, we realize that Jesus and the disciples have been so very busy! In Mark alone; feeding the multitudes, walking on water, healing the sick. Jesus realizes that they must be very tired as he, too, is weary from his own so very busy life. Jesus suggests that they should take a break – “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile.” They all had been so busy that there was not even time to eat.

So, they got into a boat and went to a “deserted” place. Well, that did not work! The people saw what they were doing and literally ran ahead to where Jesus and the disciples were going.

Think for a moment. When was there a time when you planned to “get away from it all;” life’s problems, care taking for a loved one; work expectations. You know; we’ve all lived it.

In an article in a recent Christian magazine Johanna Harader, a Mennonite pastor writes “...Jesus’ plans for getting away and being alone are ruined by this needy crowd, is a miracle we often overlook: Jesus has compassion for them.”

Jesus puts his plan to rest aside. In the next verses of Mark, we see that the hour is getting late and Jesus tells the disciples to prepare food for the crowd which they do. What happened to the planned rest?

Jesus’ miracle of showing compassion to those who were craving help from their Good Shepherd rather than resting does show his dedication to his ministry. The people were like sheep wandering without their shepherd.

However, rest is a necessity of life for the good health of plants, animals and, oh yes, people.

This brings me to the question; did Jesus ever rest? And if he did rest, just when did he do that? It does seem that he was always being called upon to cure, heal, pastor, and shepherd.

I became curious about just when Jesus rested and so I did some searching. In preparing for this morning’s worship service, I have found some interesting information in an article titled, “How Many Times Did Jesus Rest in the Bible?”

I learned from this article that there are five specific and major occurrences when Jesus went off to rest and/or to pray recorded in the Gospels.

- 1) The first and second times were after Jesus' baptism when he began his ministry which was followed immediately by the temptation in the wilderness when he ate nothing for 40 days. The second rest came after the devil tried to persuade him to make use his divine power for selfish gain. Following these two events Jesus retreated with God to understand just what was the meaning of these major moments.
- 2) The third rest period occurred when Jesus slept during the storm while crossing the Sea of Galilee.
- 3) The fourth time that Jesus rested was after raising Lazarus from the dead when he and the disciples went to the wilderness then, later stayed in Bethany, probably in the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary which occurred just before his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and which was the climax of his public ministry.
- 4) The fifth rest occurred when Jesus is described in Matthew as going to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray knowing that he would soon be arrested, tried, and crucified.

Resting after major moments is common in the Bible. In Exodus the Israelites rested after crossing the Red Sea. When Elijah defeated the Prophet of Baal he went to the wilderness. In fact, there are 275 references to "rest" in the Bible.

Jesus was in the habit of rising early to go to lonely places to rest and pray even though the demands of his time were so very great. In Mark 1:35 we read, "In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place and there he prayed.

Jesus regularly began his day in prayer preparing himself for his busy schedule – often going to the mountains. I picture the opening scene of the movie "The Sound of Music" as Maria is singing "I go to the hills" while she twirls in the beauty of that mountain.

In Luke 6:12 we read, "Now...Jesus went out to the mountain to pray' and he spent the night in prayer to God." The next day he chose the twelve disciples.

It was in all these lonely places, mountains Gethsemane, the wilderness, or other isolated places that Jesus could pour out his heart to God.

Other than the five specific instances I have referred to earlier there are many times and places where Jesus spent time alone with God to refresh himself and renew his human strength to shepherd to the many followers who followed and called upon him daily. We must remember that while Jesus was fully divine, the he was also fully human.

How does today's scripture apply to us in our daily lives?

We, too, need to stop to think about how we are living our lives and preparing for our day, but too often we do not stop. At times we even feel guilty for taking time away from just doing and doing and going and going.

Jesus did not feel guilty about taking time out. He wanted the disciples to take time away from their hectic lives as well.

Jesus says, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile”. Jesus was never too busy to take time to be with his heavenly Father to pray.

We must learn from Jesus’ example of rest, solitude, prayer.

Let us move away from our hectic lives as Jesus and the disciples did to be refreshed and renewed in the presence of our loving God.

May it be so.

Amen

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