

Rhythm for Life
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For Berkeley Chinese Community Church
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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 market-places, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

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The story goes that an ethics professor at Princeton Seminary had an unusual way of bringing this particular gospel story to life. He asked for volunteers for an extra assignment. About half the class met him at the library to receive their assignments. The professor divided the students into three groups of five each.

He gave the first group envelopes telling them to proceed immediately across campus to Stewart Hall. He told them that they had 15 minutes and if they didn't arrive on time, it would affect their grade.

A minute or two later, he handed out envelopes to five others. They were also to go over to Stewart Hall, but they had 45 minutes.

The third group had three hours to get to Stewart Hall. The students weren't aware of it, but the professor had arranged for three drama students to meet them along the way.



Close to the beginning of their walk, one of the drama students had his hands on his head and was moaning aloud as if in great pain.



About half way to Stewart Hall, on the steps of the chapel, the seminary students passed a man who was lying face down as if unconscious.



Finally, on the steps of Stewart Hall, the third drama student was acting out a seizure.



- In the first group of students, those who had only 15 minutes to get across campus, no one stopped to help.
- In the second group, two students stopped to help.
- In the last group, the one that had three hours for their assignment, all of the students stopped to help at least one person.

The professor had shown these seminarians that **hurry hinders ministry**.

Maybe that's what Jesus was teaching, too!



The disciples had been sent out two by two. They have been out on their own preaching, driving out demons, and anointing and healing the sick.



When they return they gather around Jesus and report in. They had done good work and they must have been excited about the new authority they held in the name of Jesus. Jesus must have been excited to see his apostles too; he wanted to hear about their experiences, so he invites them to come aside. "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while," Jesus said. What do you

suppose Jesus was trying to get across to his disciples?

I think he was trying to tell them and tell you and me that:

1. Hurry hinders ministry - we need to take time to be present
2. Hurry hinders ministry - saving time is not making time
3. Hurry hinders ministry - let God give you time

These are definitely important lessons – but I think it's all a part of an even bigger lesson – teaching us a rhythm for Life – for life as God would have us live...what we might call a rhythm for Christian Life. Theologian William Barclay describes *that* rhythm of the Christian Life is alternating meeting with God in the secret place and serving people in the market place.

Think about it – Isn't that what Jesus modeled for us? If following Jesus is what we are committed to, maybe we need to be reminded that there is time for serving people in the market place – for doing ministry - and time for meeting with God in that secret place...



Jesus had a way of being intentional about getting away. After healing so many at Simon's house back in the first part of Mark, he got up early to get away to pray.



And remember? when the disciples discovered he was gone? They looked for him, found him and were alarmed he wasn't where they thought he would be responding to all the needs. Remember what Jesus said? "We must go to other towns."

In other words, the needs will always be among us. Maybe an important need to remember is the need for rest and renewal.



Then there was the time after the miracle of feeding the 5,000 with five fish and two loaves...he dismissed the crowd, sent his disciples off in a boat to Bethsaida and went up a mountain for some quiet time with God....



Do you sense a pattern here? Ministry...serve...rest...time with God...ministry...serve...rest...time with God!

So we've been following Mark's gospel - in today's reading - The twelve disciples had had an exhilarating, but exhausting, experience. This was the first time they were on their own without Jesus with them. They preached, they cast out demons, they anointed the sick, and they called people to respond to God by changing their lives. And somewhere along the way – they heard that Jesus' cousin John the Baptist had been beheaded and went to claim his body and buried him.



As Jesus listened to each “team” report, he was probably moved by their stories of healing children, inspiring people, and boldly witnessing to Jesus. But, you know what? I think he might have seen fatigue in their faces and so, Jesus said to them: Come away for a while and rest. I know a place close by ~ just across the lake ~ a deserted place, a secret place.

Come away and rest ...an invitation to step out of all the bustle and activity of life. Rest ... a chance to slow down, to change the pace. Come away for a while and rest. Must have sounded like music to their ears!



What is it about pause that refreshes our ministry? What does Jesus and why does Jesus specify a deserted place for them to be all by themselves? Maybe he recognized this as a teaching moment to them and us? As my friend Pastor Moira – reminds me when I get caught up in the busyness and hecticness of ministry and life – Stop! Breathe! Slow Down! You will be good for no one if you don't take time to rest...

There seems to be a notion that **doing** is a virtue these days. But Jesus reminds us that **doing** may be a knee-jerk reaction to the needs of ministry. That we also need a thoughtful, deliberate response to ministry...in spending time with God – in reflection, in prayer, in seeking understanding and expressing gratitude. Knee-jerk ministry seeks to be all things to all people. But non-knee-jerk ministry – someone once called this knee-**bent** ministry...is prayerful ministry - taking time to be with God, to pull away from **doing**, to be still and know God.

But you might have noticed that even in seeking retreat from people, the disciples and Jesus were met by the same people in the same places they sought to get away from. The rest they were looking for

never happened. Yet it **is** important that one is intentional in seeking to get away...that we are intentional in seeking to get away...even if one does not get the chance every now and then to get away. Maybe it's impossible to always be pleasing people, but it is possible to do the things that are pleasing to God.

We have Sundays and worship here together, of course, but the rest of the week requires our intentional finding that sacred time in that secret place too. How about experiencing this right now?

We are here together this morning - in worship
we are intentional about connecting with God – let's be proactive in connecting – first with God and also with one another.

OK - close your eyes – that might help to shut out the distractions.

And listen to these words by Steve Garnaas-Holmes. It's called "*Rest a While*".

- Breathe in. <<*breathe in*>> Breathe out <<*breathe out*>>

- Let go of all you have accomplished.

- Step out of what you have done,

- Step out of the who you think you are that comes from something,

- Step out of all that into the who that is I AM.

- Be still.

- Breathe in. <<*breathe in*>> Breathe out <<*breathe out*>>

- Set everything down.

- Set down the great burden of being yourself,

- Set down what everyone thinks, even you,

- Set down the work of remembering, what you must and mustn't,
let them all go.

- Be still.

- Breathe in. <<*breathe in*>> Breathe out <<*breathe out*>>

- Come to the sabbath place where nothing, even you,
is fashioned, everything just is.

- Come into the rest that is God, the silence from which your light pours, the Spirit brooding over the waters.

- Come to the here where you are received, and receive yourself.

- Be still.

- Breathe in. <<*breathe in*>> Breathe out <<*breathe out*>>

- Breathe in. <<*breathe in*>> Breathe out <<*breathe out*>>

<<*pause*>>

All right open your eyes - How you do feel?

Are you the you that God is expecting?

Without the worries and burdens that you came in with?

Are your shoulders straighter and your head lighter?

Look around you – your friends in the pews –

Are they more relaxed too? Less cares in the world?

Or a new perspective of those cares?

This might be a good time to remind ourselves that this is the natural state that God is hoping for in us...remember Psalm 23?



Let's recite it together...

The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Sooo - every now and then - go away, have a little relaxation...when you come back to your work your judgment will be surer, since to remain constantly at work will cause you to lose power of judgment...Go some distance away because then the work appears smaller, and more of it can be taken in at a glance, and lack of harmony or proportion is more readily seen."



These are the words of Leonardo da Vinci, and no idler he; he excelled as a painter, sculptor, poet, architect, engineer, city planner, scientist, inventor, anatomist, military genius, and philosopher.



My prayer is that we do this – take time and rest – and gain perspective in all that we are doing, take time and rest so that our judgment can be better because we'll remember who and whose we are. Take time and rest to allow God to restore, replenish and refocus our minds and hearts. Take time and rest – for resting in God - even when we are serving and helping others, we are natural reflectors of God's love and hope for a peace-filled just world...God's Beloved Community!

Yes – we are and we will be busy – in our personal lives, at work, at home and at church. We are praying in earnest for our Search Committee as they seek the next settled pastor...there is always something going on at our senior center, we have a luau to host – a fabulous gift to the community! And yes, we will be scrambling – August 11th is only a few weeks away....but let's not forget the Rhythm for Life in its fullness – that we make sure our serving and ministry is intentionally paused for time with God, for sacred times of rest. May it be so....Amen!