

Sermon: Pentecost 8

The Rev. Mike Wernick

July 19, 2015

Year B

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Psalm 23

Ephesians 2:11-22

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Sometimes... when we're at work... we need to be team players... sometimes things come up that just need to be tended to... though I've worked in places... where some people consistently did as little as possible... and yet managed not to get fired...

And I know some organizations... that expect their employees to do more than can possibly be done in an eight-hour shift... but cannot pay them overtime... and will even ask why they punched out four minutes late... and I know some people who... from the moment they get to work... until the moment they leave... never stop... have a hard time slowing down... a hard time taking a break... taking a breath... taking Sabbath... being still and knowing that God is God...

One of the rituals that Joel and I often go through when we're home for dinner... is The Daily Report... we recount the litany of all we've done and accomplished that day... what I did at and for church... what I did at home... maybe what laundry I washed... if I went to the store I'll read the list of what I bought right off the receipt... he'll tell me what he can about the residents he serves and the activities he led... about any errands he ran...

Sometimes he'll speak and then I'll speak... sometimes we alternate as we think of things... we don't really think it has anything to do with our self-worth... not really... we don't keep track of who did more things... not really... we don't kick ourselves when we remember something we really needed to do... not real... well maybe sometimes... but we can laugh about it... because we don't take ourselves too seriously... not really...

Two weeks ago we heard about how Jesus called the Twelve and began to send them out two by two... gave them authority over unclean spirits... and how they cast out demons... and anointed with oil many who were sick... and cured them...

And now... the apostles gathered around Jesus... and recounted their lists for him... told him all that they had done and taught... I wonder if they took turns... or just spoke out as they thought of things... I wonder if they thought it had anything to do with their self-worth... if they wanted to earn Jesus' favor... but Jesus didn't do... what Joel and I sometimes... um... rarely do... he didn't keep score... he didn't offer any words of praise... instead he simply said... *Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while...*

Rest a while... not... how many other appointments do you have today... not what's on your To-Do List for tomorrow... not... can't you just squeeze this in before you rest... but instead... *come away and rest a while...*

Sometimes... we do need to rest a while... the spirit... mind... and body need to be fed and nourished in different ways... before we're ready to do more... a well-balanced meal... a good night's sleep... unburdening ourselves from negative emotions... for example...

But Jesus didn't just want them to take a break from their activity... this was not just taking a break from mission... this *coming away to rest* wasn't about doing less... but about him teaching them something more... and the reason we know this... is because one doesn't usually go to a deserted place... to rest and eat... a deserted place is not where food is normally found... not only that... in today's omitted vv. 35 - 52... Jesus has just fed the 5,000... and everyone has eaten... no... this is a time for a deeper teaching about the *nature* of mission and how it's to be carried out...

And another reason we know this... is because v. 52 says: *they did not understand about the loaves... and their hearts were hardened...* so Mark uses the image of a boat once again... to convey... to let us know... that another interior journey needs to take place...

Now stay with me... when you sing... there's a certain way of breathing... a certain way of projecting your voice... so it comes more from here [*belly*]... from your diaphragm... and not from here [*throat*]... I've struggled learning this... mastering this... I may hit it sometimes... but many times I don't... and when I don't... I lose my voice... my effort becomes strained... weakened... but apparently... when you sing from here [*belly*]... when you're grounded here [*belly*]... singing is easier... sounds better... and you can do it longer and with less effort...

And so you could say that Jesus wanted the disciples to sing from their true Source... from the source of Compassion... so they could do it more easily... more effectively... and for a longer time...

John Shea wrote: The scoop on compassion is that it is tiring... but the hint in today's text... is that compassion is a form of rest... when we try to be compassionate from a perspective of difference... when we see ourselves as superior and the other person in a needy position... when we are called upon from our greater health... or knowledge... or expertise to help... we can quickly get worn out...

But when we understand compassion from a perspective of sameness... when we understand compassion as happening more on a level playing field... we find in ourselves a link that connects us with the Other... but this link cannot be forced or manufactured... we cannot make a mood of it... it must be genuinely perceived... and we must refrain from identifying with any advantage we may have... the possession... or attribute... or knowledge that makes us a little bit better or luckier than they are...

This is not easy to do though... because all of our lives we have been taught to use our differences to gain advantage... and so we tend to think about what makes us unique... instead of that which makes us One...

In order to move from difference to sameness... we must *come away to a deserted place to rest*... to listen to each other's stories... and hear our own story contained in those of Others...

When we recognize our sameness... when we recognize what it is in each of us that connects us... when we increasingly see the face of Christ in everyone we meet... then our possessions... attributes... or knowledge... simply become tools that we can use to heal... not things that make us better... and then our actions come from a space of communion... from a common humanity and a common Source...

Compassion is not an achievement... but the recognition of a deeper truth of solidarity... and the consciousness of this truth is a restful place from which action flows seamlessly... without pressure and pushing... happening... seeming to happen more by itself... it's almost like singing from here [belly]... it becomes easier... sounds sweeter... and you can do it longer and with less effort...

So as you are able... take some rest this summer... but also come away... and take some Rest.

Mike+