

Sermon: Pentecost 9

The Rev. Mike Wernick

July 22, 2018

Year B

2 Samuel 7:1-14a

Psalm 89:20-37

Ephesians 2:11-22

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Summer is the season for some rest and relaxation... right... for some good ole' R&R... I mean... there are no perpendicular icicles projecting from the sides of lighthouses... the weather is *outdoor weather*... the evenings are longer... you might just want to lie in a hammock... catch some Zzzsss... have some Sabbath time...

For the Jewish people... Shabbat and Saturday go together... God created the cosmos on days one through six... and rested on day seven... so Shabbat is day seven... for Christians... the Sabbath is Sunday... the day on which Jesus rose from the dead... and it used to be that for Christians... Sabbath and Sunday went together... it used to be that Sabbath was communal... no mowing your lawn... no movies or shopping at the mall... no reading the paper... unless you closed your curtains...

Though for some... observing the Sabbath was a shallow practice... it was one of those *check-the-box* kind of things... one of those *stand-on-the-corner-like-a-Pharisee* kind of things... so people could see... there was more emphasis on how things looked... and less emphasis on how people were transformed... and now... with a more pluralistic culture... when there's less community buy-in... we must find and take Sabbath time when we're able...

In today's reading from 2 Samuel... God had given David *shabbat shalom* from his enemies... and when David was settled in his house... David asked Nathan... *How can I live in a house of cedar... when the Ark of the Covenant... the Divine Presence... the Shekhina of God resides in a tent*... so David decided to build a house for God and Nathan gave David the thumbs up... but God spoke to Nathan in a dream... there seems to be some kind of theological compromise though... God is now on Team

David... God was initially opposed to Israel having kings... but now God supports David... he's not the one who will build God's house... and there will still be consequences for the behavior in David's line... but the line will remain intact...

And the covenant that God makes with David... is the last great covenant of the Jewish Scriptures... and it leads up to how we understand Messiah... but in 2 Samuel... God turns the tables and pledges that God will build David a house... a house built through David... that when David's days were fulfilled and he slept with his ancestors... God would raise up from David's line... one who would build a different kind of household in which God could dwell... and in which we could all... as the Epistle says... be citizens with the saints... with Jesus as the cornerstone of a Living Temple... made up of the Body of Christ...

The apostles return from going out two by two... and tell Jesus all they have done and taught... and Jesus invites them to a deserted place to rest and eat... now here's what's really interesting... sandwiched between the two passages we heard today... are missing vv. 35-52... the story about the feeding the 5,000... listen particularly to vv. 35-36... *When it grew late... his disciples came to him and said... "This is a deserted place... and the hour is now very late... send the people away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat...*

Send the people away... there's nothing here to eat... the disciples know there's nothing to eat in that deserted place... no Pita House... no Le Kabob... no falafel stand... but in today's Gospel... Jesus still invites them to a deserted place to rest and eat... on the surface... there's some kind of disconnect... *come to a deserted place where there's nothing to eat... to rest and be fed...* it doesn't seem to make sense... does it...

However... as John Shea points out... *after the apostles tell Jesus about their teaching and deeds... it is not time for a break from mission... it is time for a deeper teaching about the nature of mission and how it is to be carried out... the desert becomes a*

symbol for learning how to be fed by God... and to come away to that place... means to return to the Source... and be nurtured by God...

And when Jesus had compassion for the people... *he suffered with them...* compassion means *to suffer with...* and when we ask for God's compassion... we are not asking for God's mercy... we are asking God to suffer with us... it was to have compassion for us that God became human... to know us fully... as we are still learning to know ourselves... and when we finally learn how to have compassion for each other... we'll know others the way God already knows all of us... that's what makes Jesus so irresistible... he is so eager to heal... so eager to restore wholeness... so eager to offer Shabbat Shalom...

Cheryl Bridges Johns writes... *The people who were carried to Jesus for healing... were not the people who could wear a smiling public face... in their desperation... they lack public decorum... in order to find healing and deliverance... they will cry out... beg... push through crowds... and suffer humiliation... Mark reveals a world wherein desperation overcomes order... people do not just come up to Jesus... they push through crowds in order to touch the fringe of his garment... they do not walk to see him... no... they run on ahead of him... the feet on their bodies propel them faster than the oars on a boat... so that when he arrives... they will already be there and have a better chance of contact...*

But it can be difficult for us to observe Sabbath time... when we do it more on our own than in community... it can be difficult for us to seek the spiritual food that Jesus offers when we confuse spiritual hunger with physical hunger... and are filled with fast food and food from restaurants and from our kitchens... it can be difficult for us to seek the spiritual food that Jesus offers... when we are filled with countless other distractions and diversions... it can be difficult for us to seek out deserted places because we may end up having to face our own demons or addictions... but that's why Sabbath time is so critical to our growth... because it's in that quiet... that we can also hear God telling

us... what we we need for healing and wholeness... Sabbath rest means diving deep into silence to connect once and again with the Ground of Being... with the Source from which we've come... where we can be still... and know that God is God... because God is a shepherd who cares for us dumb sheep... and who restores wholeness...

In her book... On the Road to Spiritual Wholeness... Flora Slosson Wuellner writes... *As we are healed and pulled together into wholeness... we are shown many things that we had not seen before... We are shown feelings we have had... but which have been repressed... We are shown things we have done... judgments we have made during our days of blindness and insensitivity... We are shown relationships in a new light, and facts to which we had not awakened... And as we wake and see... decisions about what we see... begin to rise in freshness and power.*

So take rest this summer... take breaks... kick back and enjoy your blessings... but also make time to dive deep into the pool of Sabbath... drink and eat well... but don't confuse the drink and food which nourishes the body... with the drink and food at this Table... which comes with wisdom... forgiveness... compassion... and love... and which nourishes the soul...

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