

Come Away With Me For Rest
Psalm 23, Mark 6:30-34

“Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest for a while.”

Before we really jump into this Sabbath-oriented experience, we have to understand the context of this passage for it to make sense. There is an assumption that rises from the context which gives this statement by Jesus real meaning. Earlier in Chapter 6, verses 7-13, is the commissioning of the disciples to go out into the villages, 2X2, to teach, cast out demons, and heal. Then comes what Biblical interpreters call a Markan Sandwich. Often gospel-writer Mark will start a story, then step aside to tell another story, then come back and finish the original story. That’s what happens here. Mark begins telling us about this missionary trip of the disciples, then he pulls aside and tells the story of Herod pursuing and executing John the Baptist, then he returns to the disciples returning from their missionary trip. That’s where our passage for today begins, the return of the disciples. Here they are called apostles which means missionaries and refers to their positions of authority in the early church.

So here is the assumption. Jesus’ call to rest makes sense in the context of disciples who are serving. When we are serving God through our church, in our families, neighborhoods, workplaces, and community at large, then we grow tired and Jesus’ invitation to come away to rest makes sense. So this call of Jesus is meant for the ears of those who know what it is to be tired from serving in God’s vineyard.

Now, back to these disciples, called apostles here...they are back and they are tired. Likely they are dirty from dusty travel, hungry, thirsty, ready for a break. They need a Psalm 23 experience. They are ready to lie down in green pastures, walk beside still waters, and have their souls restored. They are ready for a table to be prepared for them. Have you been there before? Have you been there lately? Next Sunday we will hear some about the El Farro Mission Trip as pastor Dana preaches and you can bet there were some tired missionaries after that trip.

There are times when this invitation of Jesus is music to our ears: “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest for a while.” Maybe this invitation is for those of you who are caring for declining parents, giving of your time to care for your loved ones. Maybe

this invitation is for you who are working in non-profits, knowing you could make more money elsewhere but you are working for the common good. Maybe this is for those who serve as police officers or firefighters or teachers who's jobs don't pay enough to sustain your family so you work extra shifts all the time, but you do it because you know your contribution makes your community better. This invitation is for you... "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest for a while."

Back at the beginning of this Summer Sabbath focus I mentioned there will be objections of which we are currently unaware which will rise as we engage Sabbath together. This passage brings two objections from our culture to the surface.

1 – We are too busy to go away and rest with Jesus. Sleep patterns – 2013 average American got 6.8 hours per night. 40% get less than 6 hours per night. Back in 1910, people slept an average of nine hours per night. (Forbes magazine article, "America The Sleep-Deprived.")

Work Patterns:

The International Labor Organization reports that the average American worked 1,815 hours in 2002, well above the comparable figures for France (1,545) and

Germany (1,444), for example. (The average South Korean, on the other hand, worked over 2,400 hours.) Take less vacation...left it on the table?

Source of pride - ??

Americans are more depressed now than they have been in decades, a recent study shows. Analyzing data from 6.9 million adolescents and adults from all over the country, researchers found that Americans now report more psychosomatic symptoms of depression, such as trouble sleeping and trouble concentrating, than their counterparts in the 1980s. – Science News

Anxiety is rising dramatically too. Suicide rates rising.

"We don't have time to rest with Jesus."

We don't NOT have time to rest with Jesus!

We better make time, for our own well being.

2. How can we practice Sabbath, how can we go away with Jesus to a deserted place and rest for a while, when there are so many hurting people and unmet needs right in front of us? Certainly God has noticed as we have the tremendous needs in our culture – there's the need for personal conversion and transformation, there's the need to address systemic injustice, there's the need to break

through racism and build relationships across racial lines, there's the disparity between the haves and have-nots, and on and on. Isn't practicing Sabbath like...well, did you see the movie Titanic? There's that scene as the ship is going down when the small group of instrumentalists gather for one last number. Isn't Sabbath-keeping like playing on the deck of while the ship is sinking? Perhaps Sabbath is just one big form of collective denial. One might think so.

But instead, but instead, we know a secret. We know something about the end of the story. Do you know of Henry Nouwen, that excellent spiritual writer? Here's how he describes the secret: "Waiting, as we see it in the people on the first pages of the Gospels, is waiting with a sense of promise. People who wait have received a promise that allows them to wait." (Seeds of Hope) Here is the secret or the promise that allows us to wait, allows us to practice Sabbath – We know how the story ends. Various places in the Bible, including the book of Revelation, communicate clearly that in the end, God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. In the end, God will renew the heavens and the earth. God will descend to earth and establish a new city here. God will set all wrongs right and will establish his kingdom, his

commonwealth here as it is in heaven. God will remake this world to fulfill its original intent during creation – this world will become good and beautiful and healthy. Then there will be no more despair, no more poverty, no more enmity between the races. There will be no more division between humankind but we will be one human family as God intended us to be. Political divisions, racial divisions, gender divisions, economic disparity...all of these will come to an end. Instead in this new earth, harmony and goodness and a far better world than we can imagine will exist. God's will shall be done on this earth as it is in heaven – and we know this. We trust God will do this. Therefore, since this is where history is moving, since we trust that God's will shall be done earth, we can come away with Jesus to rest. We can avoid being consumed by zeal and we can live in trust for God. "People who wait have received a promise that allows them to wait."

Even though we know this, even while we are in on the secret, we American Christians struggle to give ourselves permission to rest.

Suggesting 2 insights:

1 – There is enough time to do what God calls us to do
-My struggle when turning 50, mid-life transition

- God loves us and would not set us up to fail
- Not everything on our to do list is necessary or essential
- God provides enough time for us to do what God calls us to do and keep our sanity, our relationships, and health

2 – Practicing Sabbath is a form of protest...hear me out. We are hearing about, seeing, and participating in protests in 2017-18 and they aren't going away. Practicing Sabbath is a form of protest. The world tells us to get busy, that if we don't make it happen it won't, that it's all up to us. Sabbath says, O no it's not! By practicing Sabbath we protest against the hubris and arrogance of our culture who believes we are in control of everything. Through Sabbath we acknowledge there is a God and we are not God. Through Sabbath we recognize that we bear responsibility for much in this world, but that ultimately we are not in control. Sabbath says there is a higher power who cares more about the plight of humanity than we do ourselves. Sabbath is protest against a society and culture who thinks too highly of itself.

So, sister and brothers in Christ, let us recognize that there is enough time to do what God calls us to do. And Church let's join the protest. Let's be counter-cultural by living in faith and trust, believing that God will accomplish

God's purposes whether our world believes that or not. Let us be Sabbath people this day and all the days our lives.

Through the grace and power and love of Jesus Christ our Lord, may it be so. Amen.