

You Deserve a Break Today!

(Mark 6:30 – 34)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

"The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving, recognised them, and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began to teach them many things."

Dear friends in Jesus,

"I need a break!" Have you ever said this after a busy time? Jesus had sent his disciples out, two by two, to proclaim the kingdom of God, to proclaim the need for repentance of sins, and to heal the sick and the suffering. On their return from this mission they reported to Jesus all that they had done and taught. To escape the demands of a crowd pressing upon him, Jesus said, "***Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.***" They sailed by boat some 10 kms across the lake to a lonely and secluded spot. But some people saw them go, told others, and hurried on foot around the lake, a trek that was about 18 kms, to follow Jesus. Just after Jesus told his disciples, 'You deserve a break today,' the presence of about 15,000 people made it impossible. Following our sermon text this morning Jesus performed that wonderful miracle where he miraculously fed the 5,000 plus women and children.

Let's look at this incident of Jesus and his disciples crossing the lake to get some rest and then being confronted by a large crowd of people. Let's look at this incident from two different vantage points. Here is an intermission and here is an interruption. Here we can see ourselves, and we can see the one the people walked 18 kms to see.

There's nothing wrong with rest. We don't have to feel guilty for taking a break. Of course some individuals will always abuse a privilege, but here we are speaking of a well-deserved rest.

The word intermission often used in the theatre and occasionally in sporting events, means a chance for the artists and sportspeople to rest, before they have to go out again and perform.

Right back in the beginning God ordained rest. Genesis gives us a clear proportion - six days of work and one day of rest. The Lord made it even clearer in his third Commandment, "**Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.**" Jesus himself gave this comforting invitation, "**Come to me all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.**" God's Word encourages us to make good use of the breaks and intermissions of life.

Why do we need rest? The best reason is the way our bodies are put together. Not even the best trained athlete in the world can continue to perform indefinitely. You may go on until you drop, but drop you finally will. There are things you can take to put you to sleep, and stimulants to keep you awake, but the best choice is to balance work and rest.

The crowd that had hiked kms to see Jesus also needed a break, in the sense of finding something good and helpful for their lives.

Imagine people waiting for the great Physician - a woman saying, 'Please Jesus, will you lay your hand on my sick daughter.' Or another who says, 'My father hasn't been able to straighten his back for many years. Will you help him?' A woman holding a screaming child says, 'My child has had a severe pain in his stomach for five days. Will you heal him?' What does one do with interruptions like these?

Imagine your family doctor arriving for a well-earned break at a popular resort. As he goes to the front desk to register, he sees 25 of his patients from home quietly waiting there to see him. You wouldn't blame this doctor for leaving straight away.

How do you deal with interruptions particularly when we get a lot in a short time? Don't we often consider interruptions to be annoying and aggravating?

Jesus never seemed too busy for interruptions. He responded to the cries of the ten lepers and to blind Bartimaeus. On his way to Jairus' home he healed a woman who was bold enough to touch the hem of his garment. He spent a long time with an evening visitor, Nicodemus, and answered Martha's complaint about her sister Mary.

Jesus changed interruptions into opportunities for ministry and service. When I get my priorities switched, I think of the cartoon depicting a pastor, who was scolding his little son for interrupting him while he was preparing a sermon. 'I'm working on a sermon about patience.' For some, interruptions can become opportunities. For others they are just a bother.

Jesus described the crowd that came to him like 'sheep without a shepherd.' In Matthew's Gospel they are characterised as 'harassed and helpless.' They were lost, confused, and didn't know which way to go. They were frightened and anxious. Do you sometimes see yourself there, like sheep without a shepherd?

Life can be scary in this uncertain world. Many of God's children are anxious about the future. Some are anxious about their health, about growing older, about lives being torn about by family tension. Most of us have real needs that only the Good Shepherd can meet and satisfy.

The picture of the caring Shepherd becomes clear and more meaningful. 'He had compassion on them.' The Greek word for 'compassion' means both sympathy and pity- a feeling of affection that comes from deep within. The New English Bible says, 'His heart went out for them.'

You and I have experienced the heart of Jesus in our lives. That heart of Jesus has touched us most deeply and wonderfully through his painful death for all our sins on Calvary's cross, and through his glorious Resurrection as Conqueror of all those sins. We are deeply forgiven, loved and strengthened in our faith through his comforting and living Word, and through our gift of Baptism where the Holy Spirit forged an indelible relationship with Jesus, and through the celebration of Holy Communion where Jesus assures us of the forgiveness of all our sins as we receive his precious body and blood. What a remarkable Saviour we have! We claim Jesus' promise, 'Because I live, you will live also.'

'You deserve a break today,' but the best break you will ever have, is that day when you start spending eternal life with your Good Shepherd and Saviour, Jesus, in glorious heaven. **Amen.**

May the peace of God, which passes all human understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sermon by Pastor Graham Zweck, 25 July 2021