

Mixed Team Meeting – Resting on the Journey: Jesus' Example

Meditation : *Mark 6: 30-34*

The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, “You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest awhile”; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But people saw them going, and many could guess where; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.

Responsorial Psalm : *Psalm 22*

Response The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

1. The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit. **R.**
2. He guides me on the right path;
He is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your staff;
with these you give me comfort. **R.**
3. You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. **R.**
4. Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever. **R.**

Study Topic – Resting on the Journey

As we read the gospels we could easily interpret Jesus as being the super busy activist always on the go moving from place to place, always doing and being with the people, preaching and performing miracles. It seems that often when Jesus tried to be alone, the crowds would just follow him and swamp him. As soon as he began his ministry he was at the top of everyone's must see list, crowds of people would travel for miles just to get a glimpse of him, to hear him speak or even better to just get a touch of the corner of his cloak.

Today, in a busy world, we, as Christians, can be very active, but wind up just wearing ourselves out and getting very frustrated. This is something that Jesus never did. When we take a closer look at the gospel accounts of Jesus' life we can see that his life was much more balanced, as he went about his ministry and he was never in a hurry or stressed out by what he was doing. He didn't have a quota of healings to complete in a day or a set number of people he had to reach out to at any one time. He didn't allow the pressure and the needs of all the people around him to shape what he did.

Consider how his ministry begins. Between Jesus' birth and when he appears to John the Baptist to be baptized, apart from the short story we have about him being at the temple as a boy in Luke's gospel, we hear nothing about his life growing up. We can assume that it was a time where he was learning about himself, how to be a carpenter, and the tasks that lay before him. It is only when he reaches his thirties that his public ministry begins and that only for a short time of 3 years. But note even here how it all begins, he doesn't launch into service full steam ahead but he is baptized by John and from there he is led by the spirit out into the wilderness where he spends the next 40 days. His time alone in the desert wasn't something that happened only at the beginning of his ministry, but it was something that Jesus continued to do regularly throughout his ministry. Luke chapter 5:16 tells us that *'Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed'*. He understood the importance of taking time out to be alone, away from the busyness to be recharged physically and to be with his Father, to cultivate that relationship and be refreshed in his spirit in order to continue to minister to others, and to continue following the plan his Father had for him.

The gospels also point out to us very specific occasions during his ministry where Jesus retires to be alone to pray and be with his Father in order to know his Father's will and to be strengthened, e.g. before he chooses the apostles (Luke 6:12), after the death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:13) before the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1) and before he is arrested in the garden of Gethsemane (recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke).

Jesus set the example for us to follow, and encouraged his disciples to do the same. In Mark 6:7-12 we read how Jesus had sent the disciples out in pairs to preach the good news and perform miracles. In Mark 6:30-32 we see what happened upon their return. They were excited to report back to Jesus about all they had seen and done and with all the different people coming and going they had no time to eat. They were on a roll, yet Jesus calls them to come away with him to somewhere quiet in order to rest.

Through what he does he is teaching them another lesson, which he demonstrates in his own life. He is teaching them the need to take care of themselves and get a proper balance in life and so rather than encouraging them to do more, he says to them that they need to take time out and rest. In doing so he is giving both them and us today, the permission to stop what we are doing and take time to care for ourselves, to take food and water and to rest our bodies. In doing this we are better able to serve, as we become refreshed and recharged in order to start again.

Not only is it just to care for their physical well being, but also their spiritual and emotional well being. Jesus tells his disciples to come away with him, not to go off on their own, but to be with him to cultivate their relationship to a deeper level. The disciples were in danger of rushing off and doing all sorts of good things in Jesus' name yet forgetting or being too busy to actually spend time with him.

Today Jesus wants that same kind of relationship with each of us. He wants us to spend quality time with him getting to know him well, getting to know his heart, so that our actions are rooted in understanding God's love for his people. In this way it is not just our thoughts and ideas of what we think would work well, but rather it is God working his plan through us. God wants us to spend quality time with him, not to be always "doing", he wants us "being".

Questions

1. How did it benefit Jesus in taking time to withdraw to be alone and to pray?
2. For Jesus, time alone with God was part of his behaviour pattern. As we think about our own lifestyle, how does it help or hinder our walk with God? Is there anything we would like to change?
3. How do you respond to the Teams Endeavour of a Sit-Down ? Does your current response fulfil the need to withdraw to commune with God ?
4. Where could we create our own special places for communion with God if we don't already?

Concluding Prayer :

From rushing around to stillness, Lord we come.
From being pulled in all directions
To the simplicity of this moment, Lord we come.
Help us to realign our wills with your will
And our spirits with your spirit
As we reach out to you
In the silence. Amen.

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