

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – July 22, 2018

Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

**Mark 6:30-34:** (NIV)

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31) 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.**" 32) So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33) But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34) **When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.**

**Friends in Christ:**

From time to time every can benefit from a little *R & R*. The phrase *R & R* is military slang for *Rest and Recuperation* – sometimes it's called *Rest and Relaxation* or *Rest and Recreation*. The practice of giving soldiers or workers some well-deserved time off to rest and recuperate isn't exactly a modern idea. In fact, our text for today reminds us that *R & R* is a part of God's plans for the people he created.

Previously Jesus had sent the 12 apostles out in groups of two to the various towns and villages of Galilee. The apostles ... **preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.** (Mark 6:12-13 NIV) It was about this time that wicked King Herod executed John the Baptist. Upon their return, **the apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.**

We might wonder why it was that those who had been sent out by Jesus returned at this time. Had this time been pre-determined in advance? Had they come to the end of the itinerary they had marked out for themselves? Did they cut their mission short when they learned about the death of John the Baptist? Many of them were personally acquainted with him. Had they become apprehensive about continuing to preach the Gospel after hearing what had happened to John? We don't know the answers to those questions but this much we can say – these were men who had lots on their minds and who needed some *R & R*. Christ will need to help them cope with their physical, emotional, and spiritual fatigue. And Jesus was up to the task.

You and I also are prone to the physical, emotional, and spiritual fatigue that is a routine part of the lives of Christians living and working in a world is opposed to Christ and his saving Gospel. Where can we go to experience some *R & R*? Jesus has the answer. Jesus has invited those who are weary and burdened to come to him and has promised to give them rest. (cf. Matthew 11:28-30) Our text for today shows Jesus fulfilling that promise.

**Theme: Jesus Gives Rest**

1. To Weary Workers
2. To Wandering Souls

**The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31) Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat...**

After traveling from village to village, preaching, casting out demons, and healing the sick with the power that Christ gave them these men must have lots of stories to tell. It's always a joy for those who serve the Lord to share their experiences with their fellow believers. And that's especially true when the Lord has blessed you efforts to tell others about their Savior with success. Unfortunately, these weary workers weren't

even able to enjoy a quiet “lunch” with Jesus. There was no way that they could have the time they needed to unwind and share their experiences with Jesus because of all the people. Jesus understood their physical need for rest. They had worked hard. They were experiencing some emotional challenges. They were weary from the physical exertion of their travels.

Jesus knew that there was more work ahead of them – soon these men are going to be responsible for feeding 5000 wandering souls. Jesus knew that they needed some down time so he said to them: **"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."**

Surely, these verses remind us of the ebb and the flow of lives. Our lives are filled with days of work that leave us weary. Emotional challenges cause us fatigue. It's no wonder that when Friday rolls around we say, TGIF! Thank God it's Friday. For most the weekend provides a well-deserved opportunity for rest and recuperation. But this period of rest and relaxation is only temporary. When Monday comes it will be back to the grind.

This is pattern of our lives. When work has wearied us, then comes the time for rest and relaxation which reinvigorates us for more work. It's no wonder that we long for the eternal rest that will be ours in heaven.

### **32) So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.**

Alone with Jesus at last, the apostles could talk with Jesus and listen to his response. Time alone with Jesus is often one of the ways that Jesus provides rest for us when we are weary from our work. He listens to our prayers. He shares his peace, his love, his comfort, his forgiveness, his strength, his vision of eternal blessings with us to reinvigorate us for the tasks that lie before us.

#### **Jesus Gives Rest**

1. To Weary Workers
2. To Wandering Souls

It is true that Jesus provides rest for weary workers but even more importantly, Jesus gives rest to wandering souls. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that there is a rest remaining for God's people that will enable them to enjoy lasting rest from their work. (Cf. Hebrews 4)

The physical rest that Jesus and the apostles were enjoying on the boat as they traveled to a solitary place was short-lived. **But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.**

Jesus and his disciples had been in the fishing village of Capernaum. It would have been easy for them to find a boat and to sail along the shoreline to the other in a leisurely fashion. It was also easy for the crowds of people who had been coming and going around Jesus and his disciples to figure out where the boat that Jesus had entered was headed. As the group from Capernaum followed the boat along the shoreline, more and more people from the villages along the way joined in the journey.

These were the wandering souls that met Jesus on the other side of the lake. They were looking for more from Jesus: more teaching and more miracles. Sadly, it appears that they were primarily interested in the physical blessings that Jesus could provide rather than the lasting rest for their souls that Jesus offered. The Gospel accounts tell us that after Jesus had spent the day teaching this crowd that he miraculously provided food for them and that they decided that would try to make a king by force. We can learn from them to pay close attention to Jesus and to not reject the true rest that he offers wandering souls.

**When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.**

This wasn't exactly what the apostles were expecting ! Their time alone with Jesus was confined to the journey in the boat. Their time with the Savior had no doubt been refreshing but now their labors and Jesus' labors would resume. Jesus was filled with compassion for the crowd. His heart ached for these wandering souls. Not only had they wandered all the way to the other side of the lake – but they were wandering through life searching for lasting hope and rest. They were like sheep without a shepherd. They had no one to lead them in the paths of righteousness. No one to supply their needs. No one to watch over them and comfort them with the sure hope of eternal goodness and mercy.

They were spiritually lost and wandering souls. God had given his people the command to honor the Sabbath Day by setting it apart as a day for a sacred assembly. God had also commanded his people to conduct numerous sacrifices which were a shadow of the perfect sacrifice the lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world would make. But unfortunately the spiritual leaders of God's people did not point the people to the Sabbath rest that Christ would provide. Instead, they emphasized what the people could and couldn't do. Their rules placed another burden on their souls causing the people to be lost in their sins. Jesus saw not only their physical needs but also their spiritual needs.

**So Jesus began teaching them many things.** He knew their needs and he offered them the hope, the comfort, the peace, the forgiveness that only he could provide.

You and I are also wandering souls. We have wandered here – to a place where Jesus, our Good Shepherd, is present with his saving word. We have come confessing our sins and longing to hear of his forgiveness. We have come seeking rest for our souls. And we have not been disappointed – The Lord has spoken to us through his word. Jesus has offered us a break from our work and comforted our souls with the saving truths of his Gospel.

Jesus has strengthened us for the journey and the work that lies before us. Already now, we can look forward to coming together again to spend some time with each other and with Jesus. The rest we enjoy here is a shadow of the eternal rest Jesus won for us by making the perfect payment for our sins. As we gather here, we long to dwell in the Lord's house forever. But until the Lord takes us to our eternal home we will gladly hear and learn God word because we know that it is power of God for the salvation all who believe.

Go then dear friends of Christ, renewed and refreshed to serve him. But don't stay away until you are worn-out, exhausted and weak. Feast on his word in your devotions and home Bible readings and then come into his house of worship next week to enjoy the rest Jesus offers you here. Amen.