

Rest/Food for Disciples and Sheep Alike

9th Sun. after Pent. – 07/21/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Mark 6:30-44 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 31, [Jesus says to the 12 disciples,] **“Come here, just yourselves into a deserted and secluded place and rest up a little.”**

v. 34, [From that place of rest we are told,] **“And when He went out [Jesus] saw a great crowd and His inner organs turned regarding them because they were as sheep that did not have a shepherd. And He began to teach them many things.”**

Introduction

✘ From the very beginning of Creation, God designed our existence – as well as that of all living things on this planet – so that our bodies, minds and spirits must have two key things to survive and thrive: rest and food.

➔ In fact, Yahweh even modeled this for us when, after creating the heavens and the earth; the sun, the stars, the atmosphere, the land and the seas, every plant and animal, including mankind in just six 24-hour days, and purely by the power of His creative Word, we are told in Genesis 2:2-3 that “on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation.”

➔ Then in Genesis 2:16-17, in the very first one on one interaction that Scripture records between Yahweh and Adam – even before He creates Eve as mankind’s female “side” and “compliment”, we’re told that “Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’.”

✘ So it should not surprise us here in our Gospel Reading today as we see Jesus, the second person in the Triune God, interacting with both His chosen disciples as He trains them to be His first Christian pastors and then with the general population whom He desires to care for as His future sheep that Jesus here emphasizes the absolute necessity for both rest and food; that is rest and food both for the body and for the soul!

I. The Need for Rest

✘ Earlier in verse 7 of this same chapter of Mark’s Gospel, we see that Jesus sent “the twelve” disciples “out two by two” with His charge; with His authority to proclaim the message of repentance from sin and the promise of forgiveness in Jesus as God’s promised Savior of souls. And our text begins now with these apostles returning to Jesus; reporting how things went on their first mission trip.

➔ How many of you have ever been so busy with work and other responsibilities that you’ve had no time to rest or even eat? “Busy” seems to be the most common response people give whenever I ask them, “How are things going?” “Oh, I/we have been so busy!”

✘ Well, it appears Jesus and the disciples were no different. Verse 31 says that so “many were coming and going”, demanding the time and attention of Jesus and His disciples so that “they had no leisure even to eat.”

➔ And while the ministry, like any other way of life, can certainly be one of great busyness, Jesus shows us here today that being “busy” should never be allowed to sidetrack God’s design in creation that we intentionally carve out regular time away from the commotion of life for rest! In essence, Jesus shows and tells His disciples and us that being “busy” doesn’t fly as a reason

not to spend dedicated time to rest our bodies from work, but also to rest our spirits and souls with Jesus!

→ Jesus modeled this for us throughout the Gospels. In Mark 1:35 we read that “rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, [Jesus] departed and went out to a desolate place, and there He prayed.”

✘ Though His time was in great demand, with the most importance business in all the world – that of caring for both the bodies and the souls of the sick and diseased; those who needed the saving message and work that only He could give, Jesus showed that our first and greatest priority is our relationship and time with our God.

→ Two principles are in play here with this spiritual rest: 1) that it be in a place that is set apart from the demands and distractions of everyday life, and 2) that it be with Jesus where He gives His gifts! For Him and the disciples in our text, this meant getting in a boat where they could get away from the crowds. The Greek word, *erāmos* (ἐρημος) describes an uninhabited, desolate place with no connection to or distraction from the outside world.

→ This is what God’s intention is for us here in the Divine Service on Sunday morning, where we respond to the Third Commandment that says, “Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy” and Hebrews 10:25 that directs us, “not to neglect meeting together, as is the habit of some”. But as Colossians 3:16 directs us, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

→ Jesus knows well of the stress and busyness we all face throughout the week. He understands the burdens you bear emotionally and how the devil wants to drag you down even further with the lie that you “just can’t take the time to get away” for a dedicated period of rest and revitalization with Jesus. But still Jesus says not only to His chosen twelve but to you and me today in Matthew 11:28, “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

✘ You see, He invites you here dear friends, to be “yoked” to Him; to be in a deep bond with Him; apart from all of the world’s traps and tricks so that you can empty all of your sins and struggles before His cross and find comfort and relief – true “rest for your souls” in the work that He has done for you for your eternal salvation.

→ That’s why you are here this morning, isn’t it? So rest my fellow disciples of Jesus; rest here in Jesus.

II. The Need to be “Fed”

✘ And that brings us to the second necessity – our need to be fed! As Jesus comes “out” of His time of seclusion with His disciples the Greek says that He sees the crowd that was pressing upon Him and the disciples earlier, now coming toward Him and what’s He do? He doesn’t turn and run away. He doesn’t complain that he’s “too busy” to engage with them. No, He and the disciples are now rested and recharged.

→ The Greek word is “*splanknitzomai*” (σπλαγγνίζομαι) which describes a visceral turning in one’s gut; a feeling of deep compassion for someone else. In this case Jesus knows this crowd’s spiritual condition and He says they are “like sheep without a shepherd”. And what happens to sheep in the wilderness without a shepherd to care for them, feed them and protect them from predators? They die!

✘ These are the unchurched souls; the unbelieving and disconnected souls of Jesus’ day; those who know that something is missing in their lives. That’s why they are coming to Jesus. But

what they really need, they likely don't even know. So Jesus begins to teach them "many things".

→ You see they need to be fed with the very same thing that you and I need to be fed with here today. It's Jesus, who is the very "bread of life" (Jn. 6:48) and His perfect teaching of both Law and Gospel, which is His life-giving and life-sustaining and life-guiding Word in Scripture.

→ What I find so interesting in this text is that there is no mention of time. We have no idea how long Jesus spent feeding those people with His truths regarding their need for Jesus and His free gifts of love and grace; of His power over sin upon His soon-to-be death in their place and His victory over death that He would soon win for them in His resurrection.

→ It seems they were literally eating it all up to the point that apparently, after quite some time, it was the disciples who finally realized it had grown late and that the people were going to need something to eat.

✘ Now it's time for Jesus to teach His disciples (that's you and me as Christians today) a very important lesson. When they suggest that Jesus send the people away to fend for themselves, what does Jesus say? Verse 37, "You give them something to eat."

→ Notice how quickly the so-called true believers in Christ lose sight of the obvious answer to life's challenges when they come up. In almost every time of need, Jesus has already provided for His people all that is necessary to address that need. In this case, Jesus is saying to them, "You already have what they need, here among you!" But they don't get it. So, Jesus prods them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see" (v. 38). And when they tell Him they have five loaves and two fish, Jesus teaches them that that is more than enough. What seems insufficient to their human way of thinking is actually more than they will need for this crowd of over 5,000.

→ Friends, are you and I as clueless as the disciples were? It sure seems like it, doesn't it? We think that our lives depend upon how much money we have in the bank; how much we can impress our boss with our willingness to overwork our bodies and neglect our families and our time with Jesus. We think we can't risk our reputation by sharing Jesus with others. We put Jesus far down the list of our priorities, thinking that time in His Word is boring or of no help in our daily lives and relationships; that our recreation in front of a TV or on the internet or out at the lake or in the mountains can feed our souls just as much as Jesus can with His body and blood in Communion or with His saving Word in Bible Study with our fellow sheep under His care and teaching.

III. More than Enough to Satisfy

✘ And in doing so, we too easily lose sight, as Jesus' disciples did that day that all we truly need to feed those hungry souls around us for rest and salvation we already have. It's Jesus and His gifts of truth and grace!

→ Those five loaves of bread and two fish; they are a metaphor for Jesus and His Word and Sacrament gifts!

✘ He has already fed us disciples deep into the depths of our souls with all that we need for salvation and eternal life. Jesus died on the cross to pay for our guilty, sin-drenched souls. He conquered the devil and death when He rose from the grave on Easter and He has given us that eternal victory already today in the cleansing water and Word of our baptism.

→ And now, when every day we face the stress and trials and temptations and soul-wearing problems of this life here on earth, Jesus opens His arms here every Sunday and He invites us to come into His presence in Worship; to be comforted and guided by His preaching and His Word, to be encouraged by the singing of His saints and oh, to be fed with the His very own

body and blood from the cross here at His altar for the greatest rest a soul can ever receive; for the forgiveness of sins once more; for the rejuvenation and strength we need to face whatever the week ahead may throw at us; and for the peace that surpasses all human understanding to help us share His Word and serve all people with His unmeasured love!

✘ Yes dear Christians, our souls are truly satisfied by Jesus! And with all that Jesus has already given to us, we still have more than enough left over, just as the disciples found out when they gathered up twelve baskets full of bread and fish that day – more than they thought they even started with.

➔ Those baskets in verse 43 – the Greek word is “κόφινος” (κόφινος), are little wicker baskets that Jewish travelers used to carry their food and necessities. In other words these were likely the disciples’ “daypacks” that they had now emptied out to use to help distribute the food as it was multiplying before their eyes.

➔ But did you notice that when they gathered the leftover food, Jesus provided exactly 12 full baskets – one for each one of His disciples. This is Jesus’ way of providing for their needs as well. As God’s people serve Him in serving others, God also intentionally provides for His disciples; His under-shepherds as well.

✘ But what about Jesus? Where is He going to get the food He needs to keep His body going? This is the beauty of God’s stewardship within His body of believers.

➔ Remember, as Deuteronomy 10:14 says, “Behold, to Yahweh your God belong heaven and...the earth with all that is in it.” Whatever He has fed us with; whatever He provides to us for this earthly and spiritual life – it is all already His. And it is from that that you and I are privileged and happy to give a little back to Him.

➔ So it is, as we consider the challenging yet joy-filled task before us here in Christ’s Church today. Jesus has given us all that we need – both for ourselves and also to feed and care for the souls around us in the Gospel ministry of His Church. And so in joy, we return a portion of those gifts to Him in our offerings and our tithes to “feed” others with Jesus and His gifts.

Conclusion

✘ In fact He has given us enough to feed far more than the 5,000 that were fed here in our Gospel text. Jesus has given us enough to feed the entire world!

➔ For as we already know from the rest and food Jesus gives us every day, He and His gifts never ever run out! His love, His care, His provision of food and clothing, His protection, His presence, His forgiveness, His truth, His salvation, His Word, His Sacraments of grace, His eternal rest – it is always more than enough! Amen.