

2 Samuel 7:1-14a  
Psalm 89:20-37  
Ephesians 2;11-22  
Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Proper 11B  
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Quintessential Jesus, right? Taking care of the disciples, taking care of the crowds, maybe even trying to take care of himself. Still, I don't find this passage particularly remarkable, do you? It's an interesting selection of verses and I'd love to be able to ask the lectionary makers why they did this the way they did. You see, this particular reading takes 4 verses from the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark's gospel, skips 18 verses and then offers 4 more verses, none of the proffered verses very remarkable. And those 18 verses we skip for today's reading? Those are the verses about Jesus feeding the multitudes. Oh, and walking on water. Call me crazy, but I don't see why we get this bit about Jesus and the disciples going away to rest then going to Gennesaret to heal people and we don't get the infinitely more interesting walking on water or feeding 5,000 people with a couple of fish and a few loaves of bread. One biblical scholar I often read suggested we just take up the feeding of the multitudes and preach that anyway. It's tempting, but I'm not going to do that. Instead, I thought we'd just puzzle over what we've been given today and try to discover why we get such seemingly unimportant passages when we could have had something so much more thrilling.

In last week's reading, Jesus was absent. This week is all about Jesus yet he only utters one sentence. Do you remember his words? *Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.* Jesus had sent the disciples out two by two, ordering them to take nothing for their journey and to rely on the hospitality of strangers. They had been traveling through various villages, casting out demons, curing the sick and anointing them with oil, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. Now they've returned and that's where we pick up today... *The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. [Jesus] said to them 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while'.* It's interesting, isn't it? Jesus didn't ask to hear about their good work, didn't ask after people he knew in the villages they'd been in, didn't congratulate them or even ask how they were doing. He simply said *Come away and rest.* Come away and rest. Perhaps this is why we've skipped the more thrilling stories we might have heard today... perhaps the words we need from Jesus today are *Come away and rest.*

Those are important words in a world where productivity is king, where getting ahead is the goal, where our work or our even our "leisure activities" consume our lives. We need rest, not just for our minds and bodies, but for our souls too. Jesus said *Come away*, not "go away" and that meant they'd be going together to find their rest - not just because of the quiet and deserted place, but because their true rest, our true rest, is in Jesus. *My yoke is easy and my burden is light and you will find rest for your souls...*

What do you find rest for your weary soul? Who reminds you that you need to do that? I would encourage you to spend some time thinking about that. Maybe take a walk this glorious afternoon or sit in your backyard and listen to the birds, do something that creates quiet space to be with Jesus and ponder how you might ensure that you do the things you need to do in order to rest your weary soul. It was a good idea for the disciples to go away with Jesus to find rest for their souls... even though it turns out they didn't actually get to do that. By the time they'd arrived at what should have been their quiet destination, the crowds were already arriving. Thousands of people had followed them, so Jesus and the disciples gave up the idea of "some quiet time to themselves" and cared for the people who had followed them.

Mark tells us that Jesus came in from the quiet place on the lake to be with the people because he had compassion for them. Jesus was most often with the people who were sick or sad or suffering, and this day was no different.

Having compassion, Jesus cured their sick and remained with them. Setting fatigue aside, he cared for the ones who had come to be with him. I don't imagine it was easy for Jesus to do that and I am quite sure it wasn't easy for the disciples. But compassion is a word that is used over and over in the gospels to describe Jesus' actions because compassion is elemental to God's nature. Compassion is not like pity – pity happens at a distance. Jesus and the disciples could have had pity on the crowds and still stayed out in the middle of the lake to rest. But they had compassion and compassion requires being close-up and connected.

Com – with. Passion – suffering.

To have compassion is to be with suffering. It's what Jesus did throughout his life and it's precisely what he did in his death. He immersed himself in the suffering of God's beloved daughters and sons so we would know there is nothing we suffer that God doesn't suffer too.

Come away and rest. Have compassion for others and keep working, keep healing, keep curing, keep going, keep going, keep going. That apparent contradiction feels a lot like our lives. We know we need to take care of ourselves, know we need to rest and refresh, know we need to find time to be in nature, to listen to the birds or the wind or the waves, to ponder scripture, to sit in silence, to be with Jesus. But all the many things we schedule, all the important things we think we need to do leave us without the time to do those things. We confuse what we want, or what we think we want, or what we've been told we want, with what we really need. Sometimes all of those seemingly important activities are not at all what we need to do. Sometimes what we really need is to sit down and have supper with our families. Sometimes what we really need is to look at one another instead of another screen. Sometimes what we really need is simply to be quiet.

Mark tells us that people were so busy coming and going that they didn't even have time to eat. Its true today too. It seems it even happens at church. My heart breaks when people begin their conversations with "I know you're very busy," or "I didn't want to bother you" or "I'd like to talk with you but it's not urgent..."

I wonder, what on earth have I done, to leave you feeling as though I don't have time for you? You are the only reason I am here! I always have time for you. Does that mean I don't have time to rest? Not when I am mindful. And that, my dears is the key, that is the place where these two seemingly disparate ideas come together. You see, compassion isn't just for others. It is for ourselves too. Where do you need to offer compassion to yourself? And where do you need to offer compassion to others?

It isn't really a question of balance, its more a question of living an integrated life. Yes we can sleep in on Sunday because it's the only day we have to sleep in because we scheduled the heck out of Saturday... but what happens when Christians don't come together to be refreshed and renewed by word and sacrament and the love of God in Christian community? What happens when we don't come together to reflect that love and grace for each other? What happens when our souls aren't nourished and nurtured and inspired? And what will happen to the world if we're all so tired and empty that we have nothing to offer? The church, this community that is St Barnabas needs to be together in order to do the work we were given to do – to go out into the world and be the healing balm, the reconciling peace, the face of love for all of God's beloved. That is what it is to be compassionate Christian community, to be the Body of Christ giving itself for the world God has made.

What do you need from church? Why do you come to church? Do you come out of a sense of duty? A sense of delight? Do you come to be inspired? Do you come to inspire others? Because you do, you know. You inspire me and you inspire the ones around you. We need each other more today than we ever have. The world needs us more today than it ever has. So its really, really important that we steep ourselves in God's values, and that we live out those values as the particular expression of the Body of Christ that is the St Barnabas community. What is it that we need in order to live the abundant life God so wants for us? What do we need so that we can thrive, so that we can live into our sense of purpose and calling both individually and communally? What will fill us so full that we can't help but go out into the world to heal and reconcile and love?

Those are real questions, not rhetorical ones. These are the questions your church leadership is asking, and we really want to know what you think. When you walk out the door today, you'll have the opportunity to share your needs, your thoughts, your heart's desires. Please share with us by participating in the survey's questions. And then talk with one another about what matters to you, what nourishes you, what excites you. Because if we are going to be about God's work in the world, we need to know who we are as a community and we need to know and to employ the unique and particular gifts of this community. What is it that only the unique and special community that is St Barnabas, can do in the world? And what is it that you need to find your own voice and place in it all?

The whole wide world is waiting for us. Let's work together and find all we have to give. Amen