

## “COME AND GET SOME REST”

Mark 6:30-34 | Ninth Sunday after Pentecost | July 19/22, 2018

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

### **Juva, Jesu!**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

After church today/Sunday my family and I leave for a few days of camping. For many years we have camped with a group of my seminary classmates and their families at Kohler-Andrae State park down in Sheboygan. We started out with little ones that we could hold in our arms. Now those little ones are going off to college and getting married at an alarming rate. Time flies.

I've loved camping ever since I was a little kid. There's just something about it. The fresh air and sunshine. The slow pace. Big, calorie-filled breakfasts. Games at the picnic table. Sun and surf at the beach. Conversations around the campfire. I even enjoy the challenge of facing the elements in a tent, and keeping everyone dry and comfortable. Now I've got nothing against museums or tropical beaches, but for me camping is the best get-away, the most relaxing and restful vacation I can take.

In the portion of Mark's Gospel before us this evening/morning we see our Shepherd's concern that we his sheep get some rest. Jesus wants his sheep to have rest for both body and soul. Let's listen as he invites us to "COME AND GET SOME REST."

### **I. Rest for Your Body**

In last week's Gospel we heard how Jesus sent out his disciples on a preaching and teaching tour. He told them not to take any extra supplies; they were to rely on the hospitality of their hosts. He told them what to do if their message was rejected. He even gave them authority over evil spirits. You could say that he sent them out for their vicar training. They were headed out to get some hands-on experience preaching and teaching the gospel. Their basic message: Repent!

When they returned they were excited to tell Jesus all about it. I remember what it was like returning from vicar year. Our seminary is set up this way: Two years of classroom training are followed by the vicar year (kind of like an apprenticeship) and then one more year in the classroom. I vicared at Grace in Falls Church, Virginia. When I got back I had all kinds of experiences and stories to share. So did my classmates. And for the first couple of weeks of our final year, that's pretty much all we talked about. This happened. That happened. This worked. This didn't. And so on. I'm sure it was the same for Jesus' disciples. They couldn't wait to share their experiences with him.

As the Teacher listened he could tell that they were tired. They worked hard on

their little preaching tour. Not only that, they were in Capernaum. Whenever they were in Capernaum people wouldn't leave Jesus and his disciple alone. They were so busy that they didn't even have time for a bite to eat. So Jesus said, **"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."**

Work. Work. Work. Work. Work. That the default mindset of the typical American. American Adults employed full time report working an average of 47 hours per week – about an hour more than a decade ago. Nearly 4 in ten clock in at 50+ hours on the job. At the same time we Americans take less vacation time than workers from other countries: 14 vacation days a year versus 28 days in most European countries. Hard work is to be commended; being a workaholic, not so much.

Why do we work so hard? Sometimes it's for good and godly reasons. Sometimes it's about caring for the family and making ends meet and serving our Lord. But too often it's about serving our materialistic appetites. Sometimes it's because we have hard time differentiating between needs and wants. We work ourselves to death paying the mortgage on a house that's bigger than what we need, the fancy car, the cabin up north, the jet skis, the snowmobiles – you get the idea. There's nothing wrong with any of those things in and of themselves. But when we neglect our families, our friends, our health or our faith to get them, that's a problem.

We need rest. Jesus encouraged his disciples to get some rest. He himself would often sneak away to solitary places for some peace and quiet, prayer and meditation. We need to do the same. Adequate sleep, time off from work, a change of pace, an actual vacation. There is wisdom in this. Solomon wrote in the 127<sup>th</sup> Psalm: **In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.** It's foolish to work ourselves to death trying to "put food on the table." God promises to care for us.

But Jesus isn't just talking about getting 8 hours of shut-eye or taking a long weekend. He isn't just concerned about bodily rest. Note that he says, **"Come with me ... and get some rest."** There is no true rest apart from Jesus. Jesus gives us rest for our souls.

## II. Rest for Your Soul

Let's get back to our text: **They went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.** <sup>33</sup> **But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.** <sup>34</sup> **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.**

Our text contains my one of my favorite Greek words: *splanchna*. It's not only fun to say, it's also full of meaning. *Splanchna* is the word for "guts, entrails, intestines." The verb form of this word is used in our text. When the translation says Jesus "had

compassion” it literally says Jesus was “moved in his guts.” When he looked at the crowd his stomach churned.

Have you ever seen something so pathetic that it made you sick to your stomach? A family sifting through the ashes of what used to be their home. A starving child lying on a dirt floor with sunken eyes, ribs clearly visible and flies crawling in and out of his mouth. A father sitting beside the hospital bed of his little girl, his head in his hands, wishing he could take her place.

That’s how Jesus felt when he looked at the crowd that had run along the shore to meet him. Why? **Because they were like sheep without a shepherd.** Sheep are not exactly the brightest bulbs in the animal kingdom. They have a knack for getting themselves into trouble. Without a shepherd to guide them they can easily become lost or fall into a pit that they can’t get out of or end up in the belly of a hungry predator.

These people were shepherd-less sheep. They weren’t learning the truth about the Messiah in their synagogue services. And so they were looking not for a Savior from sin, but for a political Savior, a military hero to get rid of the Romans and bring back the glory days of Israel. The religious leaders of the day didn’t teach salvation by grace. Their religion was all about obeying your way to heaven. Many thought that following the rituals of Temple and Torah would put them in them in God’s good graces. In short, these sheep were leaderless and lost. Jesus saw

all this in an instant and his churning stomach moved him to compassionate action. What did he do? **He began teaching them many things.**

What he taught them was radically different from what they had been hearing. He taught them about the God who freely forgives, the God who loved them in spite of their sins. He pointed to himself as the promised Messiah, the One sent by the Father to save them. He taught them the only message that could lift the burden of guilt from their souls, the only message that could give perspective and meaning to their lives, the only message that could give rest to their souls: the message of God’s free and faithful grace.

In two thousand years nothing has changed. Like the people on Galilee’s shore that day, we are by nature shepherd-less sheep: confused and lost, harrassed and helpless. Like them we need a Shepherd to lead us to green pasture and quiet waters, a sheep-loving Savior to give rest to our souls.

And we have one. We have exactly the Shepherd we need, the only one there is. We have a Shepherd who dressed himself in the flesh of his sheep, who took our place under God’s law and fulfilled it in perfect obedience for us. We have a Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, **“a lamb without blemish or defect”** (1 Peter 1:19) whose priceless blood bleaches all our sins away. We have a Shepherd who took his life back again, a Shepherd whose empty tomb assures

victory over all our enemies, forgiveness for every sin and life that never ends.

We need regular, quiet, restful time with our Shepherd. We need to be in God's house regularly to hear his powerful Word and feast on his life-giving Supper. We need the in-depth study of his Word provided in the classrooms of Bible study, Sunday school, elementary school and Lutheran High School. We need to spend time with Jesus in our own homes, as we read our Bibles and have devotions with our families.

By the way, our family seminar is coming up on Saturday, August 4. It's a great opportunity to learn about spending quiet time with Jesus in your homes as a family. Please join us. It's not too late to register.

All of this is so important. We are so often over worked, under pressure, stressed out and just plain exhausted. We need quiet time with Jesus. In this Shepherd and in his teaching we find rest – rest from the burden of saving ourselves, rest from the weight of sin and guilt, rest that allows us to go to bed and sleep in peace, rest that allows us to get up and work for our Savior's glory and the good of our families and our neighbors.

The Shepherd himself extends the invitation. **"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give your rest"** (Matthew 11:28). "I will give you rest." That's his promise to you and me, the weary and burdened. Rest now. Rest that never ends. Amen.

**S.D.G.**