

Mark is known for writing with a sense of urgency and inserting stories within stories. We saw this with the daughter of Jairus, leader in the temple and the woman with the hemorrhage. In addition to the sense of urgency and interrupting stories with another story. Readers are also bounced from one topic to another. For me it almost feels like a game of pin ball. Before our passages for this morning Jesus calls his 12 disciples and sends them out to heal and to teach. Our lectionary reading from chapter 6 verse 30 to 34 tells us of the 12 disciples returning from their mission trip and Jesus trying to retreat from the crowds so they all can get some rest. Then comes the death of John the Baptizer. Followed by the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus walking on water.

Listen to the WOL from Mark 6: 30-44

Whew! That was a lot of action and activity. But in spite of the stories rushing from one thing to another There are also a number of lessons for us this morning. We started our reading with the disciples returning from their mission trip and trying to tell Jesus all that had happened. I can just picture them jostling and interrupting each other to tell their stories. On top of that mayhem many people were coming to Jesus for teaching and healing so that the disciples and Jesus did not even have time to eat.

(The sermon included two “mini scenes” where church members played roles as the disciples and Jesus to help visualize the experiences. Where you see italics and bold/highlighted text below is where the “mini scenes” took place.)

Disciples come into sanctuary from the double doors with mics on. Walk to front of sanctuary to Jesus – Start speaking when you reach the 6th pew. You will be interrupting each other but just say your lines.

Disciple 1 Russ Hovda as James “Rabbi, you won’t believe the experiences we have had!!

Disciple 2 as John “Yes, Lord, it was just incredible!”

Disciple 3 as James “I have never experienced such faith! People were healed, they came to belief in you and we even cast out demons.”

Disciple 5 as Levi “Wow! Jesus. I never knew I could speak before a crowd. They really listened! I am so pumped and exhausted.”

Back to sermon text from Nancy

Seeking some respite, the disciples and Jesus got in the boat and went away to a deserted place by themselves. Jesus and the disciples knew the importance of this. They did get to the secluded place, There would be no respite as a large crowd had gotten there before them. While it is the

role of the church to provide both opportunities for ministry and to encourage members to seek restorative rest. This is easy to advise but oh so hard to live.

The years of taking care of Richard along with engaging in fulltime ministry taught me that all work and no rest made for a crabby and burned out Nancy. So the question is how can this congregation support other members, family and friends to maintain that balance? I think this is one of the questions we struggle with in a post COVID world. So many people have said that they learned to enjoy their quiet time at home And that there were a number of activities they used to do that they did not miss at all. People also shared that they learned to really appreciate quiet time alone and fun time with their family. These are great lessons from COVID.

On the other hand it seems to be easy to slip back into the previous rat race of life. A quote that is often applied to work is that 20% of the people do 80% of the work. And another is if you want something to get done, ask a busy person to do it or do it yourself. As a session, we need to regularly assess the distribution of the workload among the members, session, and staff. Find ways to quickly engage new members in service and ministry too. Create a culture in which people are encouraged to determine their Spiritual gifts and put them to use. At the same time, plan retreats and opportunities for reflection and rest

Jesus had compassion on crowd because they were like a sheep without a shepherd. This suggests that the religious leaders of the day were busier with their own agendas rather than being available to the people. I have served with two pastors who taught me how not to be in parish ministry. One came into the office each morning and closed his door asking that he not be disturbed as he was working on his sermon. At noon, he emerged from his office and went home and did not return. The other kept his door open but positioned his very large and unfriendly German Shepherd dog in the doorway. Clear message here, don't bother me. Jesus on the other hand had compassion on the people and did not seem to see ministry – teaching, healing, and other miracles as an interruption but a gift.

God is like that. He wants us to come to him and welcomes our questions, concerns, joys and frustrations. Wherever he went the people brought those in need. Jesus' first response was and still is to today to reach out to people, meet with them, teach, preach and open the power and possibility of life in God's kingdom.

As a congregation we need to do our part to prepare ourselves to “meet Jesus” every day. Some questions to ponder. What do you need to live a more abundant life? – to feel whole, to be content, to lead fulfilling lives, to feel like you belong, to flourish and to be the people God has called us to be. What do you have to contribute in the way of your time, talents, Spiritual gifts? and what can we do as a community of faith together? What will it take for us to continue to be a vibrant church that has a sustained and substantial commitment to the surrounding community? What would motivate you to feel compassion so you can meet the needs of this world that God loves so much?

On the rest and renewal side, how do you need to prepare yourself to come to worship not from a sense of duty, but out of a sense of delight, desire, and anticipation? Even though Jesus and the

disciples had come seeking rest, They met a large crowd who had walked around the lake to see him.

So Jesus had compassion on the people and began to teach them many things. When it grew late his disciples came to him and said,

Disciple 2 as Levi “This is a deserted place and the hour is now very late; send the people away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.”

Jesus - “You give them something to eat.”

Disciple 4 as Thomas

“Are we to go and buy Two Hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat? (Side comment. I wish I hadn’t said that. My fellow disciples and I – so soon we forget. We just recently returned from our first mission trip teaching, healing and had been a part of the power of God. When are we going to learn that God can do anything. We think more about finances than faith)

Jesus – “How many loaves have you? Go and see.”

Disciple 1 as Jesus, “Rabbi, we found five loaves and two fish.” *Side comment in a whisper – “This is going to be a fools errand. There must be 5000 men here plus women and children”*

Jesus – *speaking to the disciples first* “Have the people sit in groups on the green grass.” Stage notes *Hold bread and fish up high and look at them. Then put them in one hand so you can read your script.* “

Heavenly Father, on behalf of these people here today we give you thanks for this meal which we are about to receive. Nourish us in spirit and in body. Amen

Back to sermon text from Nancy

Sometimes finding the right balance is a challenge. I believe this is one of the lessons Jesus is trying to teach us here. And the good news is Jesus provides for our needs. One of the most beautiful and comforting scripture passages the outlines these promises is the 23rd Psalm. As it gives us a concrete example of what God provides so we can both engage in ministry as well as rest and renewal.. Instead of reading it, we will be singing it at the end of worship. But first I want us to notice all that Jesus provides. As Marcia plays the introduction look carefully at the words of hymn 172 and reflect on them.

Amen.