

Come and get some rest!

Do any of these statements apply to you?

- As much as you crave white space on your calendar, it also gives you anxiety.
- You notice yourself checking your phone obsessively throughout the day, particularly when you are tired, overwhelmed, or anxious.
- When someone suggests that you relax and do nothing, you say to yourself or out loud, “What does that even mean? What do people do when they do nothing?”
- When you do find yourself doing nothing, you feel guilty that you aren’t being productive.
- You mentally tally the number of productive hours you’ve had at the end of the day and judge how you feel about yourself by how full your day was.
- You find yourself “complaining” about how busy you are while simultaneously feeling proud of having so much on your plate that you can barely breathe.

If you said yes to any of those questions, you might be addicted to busyness. We live in a culture that celebrates being busy. We are obsessed with getting it all done and fitting it all in. One writer put it this way: *“The devil implants taxi meters in our brains. We hear the relentless tick, tick, tick telling us to hurry, hurry, hurry, time is money—resulting in this roaring blur called the human race.”* To illustrate how busy we are in life, a recent study showed that only about ½ of Americans use the vacation that is due them. Do you know why people don’t use their vacation hours? The answer is *fear*. They fear getting behind on their work (34%), believe no one else can do their work while they are out of the office (30%), they are completely dedicated to their company (22%), and they feel like they cannot be disconnected (21%). And so, we find ourselves in this trap: We need to be busy to feel good about ourselves, but at the same time we live in fear of not meeting someone’s expectation. We need rest.

God knows we need rest. He knew the disciples needed rest. Jesus had just sent them out by two’s to go and tell others about Jesus. He sent them out into the nearby towns and villages. He had trained them. It was now a chance for them to use that training. As they taught about Jesus, we are told that Jesus gave some unique gifts to them. **“They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.”** After returning to Jesus, they had so much to share with Jesus. Yet, in the verses just before our text, they had gotten word that John the Baptist had been beheaded. Immediately after our text, Jesus feeds the 5,000. Their bodies, their minds, their emotions must have just been turning around in circles. Between these two events, between the pain of life and the joy of life, Jesus says to his disciples: **“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”** Jesus could see that his disciples needed rest.

I think we can understand how the disciples felt. We have those kinds of days and weeks; those weeks that are filled-to-the-brim with activities. We get worn out. We need rest. The more tired we get, the more impatient, restless, short-tempered we get. A rechargeable battery needs to be recharged at times for it to continue to work. In order to be re-energized for work, we need to be refreshed with rest. As much as God wants his people to have spiritual rest, he especially wants them to also have spiritual rest.

Ever since the Garden of Eden, the human race is plagued with stress. That’s where this tension between God and mankind first appears in this world. In Genesis 3, we see a world that now will be filled with stress. God describes the stress that sin would now bring to the world. As Adam worked the ground, it was not going to be a pleasure anymore. There would be thorns and thistles. To Eve God says that there is going to be great pain in child bearing. This world was now going to have pain, stress and anxieties. That’s what sin does to this world.

Yet, God didn’t leave Adam and Eve alone. He promises that he is going to send someone who will relieve this world from its stress and sorrow. Someone who is going to take care of the stress that sin brought to this world. That someone, of course, was Jesus. Jesus knew that the disciples needed physical rest. More importantly, he knew that need rest from the stress of sin. The disciples also needed the words of Jesus to also bring rest to their souls. They need some alone

time with him, just as we need time with Jesus. In order to give them rest, he taught them about their sin. He pointed them to himself. He was the one who would give them rest – eternal rest. That’s why Jesus came. He had come to bring rest to their guilty and troubled consciences.

This rest wasn’t meant for just the disciples, it was also meant for all. Jesus and his disciples borrowed a boat and began to sail on the Sea of Galilee. They weren’t sailing fast most likely. After all, they were looking for rest, not breaking a speed limit on the lake. While they sailed, they did get some much needed rest.

The people saw Jesus in the boat and figured out where he was going. They began to follow him along the shoreline. Along the way, they picked up more people. The crowd began to grow – 5,000 men, plus women and children. **“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.”** So, Jesus became the Shepherd that David wrote about in our Psalm for today – Psalm 23. He wanted them to enjoy green pastures and quiet waters. He wanted them to be comforted when they would walk through the valley of the shadow of death. He wanted them not to fear evil. He wanted them to eat of the eternal banquet in heaven. He wanted them to repent and to trust in him as their Savior as well. **“So, he began teaching them many things.”** He saw them as sheep who needed a shepherd. He had compassion on them.

Compassion -- that he would demonstrate by shedding his blood for this world on the cross. Compassion -- that promises eternal life through faith in him; Words that nourish and strengthen us. We need the rest for our souls that only Jesus can give.

The story is told of two men who were woodsmen. One day one of the challenged the other to an all-day tree chopping contest. The challenger worked very hard, stopping only briefly for a brief lunch break. The other man had a leisurely lunch. He took several breaks during the day. At the end of the day, the challenger was surprised and annoyed that the other man had chopped down significantly more wood than he did. He turned to the other man and said: *“I don’t get it. Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, yet you chopped more wood than I did. How did you do that?”* *“But you didn’t notice,”* the other replied, *“that I was sharpening my ax when I sat down to rest.”* The words and promises of Jesus not only bring rest to our souls, it also sharpens us to work for Jesus.

We live in a *busy* world. We need rest. We need rest for our bodies. We need rest for our souls. May we listen and trust the words of Jesus: **“Come and get some rest.”** Amen.