

Real rest only happens with Jesus

Text: Mark 6:30-34 for 7/22/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." ³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³ But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ 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.

When you think of summer what comes mind? Heat, humidity, hanging out by the lake trying to stay cool. For many people, summer is the time to take a vacation. It's a time to pack things up and get away from all the chaos of daily life. We all need some time away to allow our bodies and our minds to relax and rejuvenate.

But have you ever gone on vacation and then come home feeling like you needed a vacation? Sometimes we take a vacation, and then we end up doing so much that we come back feeling as tired and worn out as when we left! The problem is that we don't get the rest we needed.

As we study these words from Mark's Gospel we hear that the disciples needed a vacation. They had been working hard proclaiming the message of repentance that Jesus had sent them out to share. Now they were back with Jesus and needing some rest. So Jesus plans a vacation, of sorts, for his disciples. As we work to understand what Jesus is saying and doing we want to keep one important point in mind. God wants us to understand that ...

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- I. Real physical rest with Jesus.
- II. Real spiritual rest in Jesus.

The twelve Apostles had been working hard preaching, teaching, and healing people. Returning to Jesus they gather around him and tell him about all the work they have been doing. But there was a problem. Mark tells us that there were **"so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat"** (v. 31a). What the disciples needed at that point was some rest; time to rest their bodies and their minds. Unfortunately, the busyness of daily life was getting in the way.

So Jesus tells them that they are going to get away from the crowds so they can rest. But Jesus doesn't send them away by themselves. He says, **"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest"** (v. 31b). Jesus knew that if his disciples were going to have real rest they needed him to be there. The apostles wanted to tell Jesus about their work. They needed time to share with him their successes and their failures. They needed their Lord's feedback and encouragement on their work, so they could have "peace of mind" that would allow them to properly rest their bodies.

We need those times of physical and mental rest too. The stresses of life build up tension in our bodies and minds: working, playing, caring for members of our family, dealing with friends and neighbors, taking care of the material things that God blesses us with. All of these things come with their own stresses – some good and some bad. Those stresses take a toll on us. That stress drains our physical and mental energies. That stress can wear down our resolve to fight against temptation.

So what do we do when we need rest? We go on vacation! In some way we "get away from

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it all.” We may travel to get away, or we might not go anywhere at all. We may immerse ourselves in different types of entertainment, such as books, concerts, plays, T.V. shows, or movies. Perhaps we spend some time on a hobby we really enjoy that helps to us relax. Or maybe we indulge ourselves a little with something that we hope will make us feel better, like eating at a fancy restaurant or getting special treatment at a spa.

Now there is nothing inherently wrong with any of the things I just mentioned. But did you notice what was missing from all of them? What’s missing is Jesus! Remember what Jesus said to his disciples? **“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest”** (v. 31b). Real rest only happens with Jesus!

Our bodies, minds, and souls are connected, so to have true rest we need to rest all of them. Yet how easy it is to plan time away and not include Jesus in our plans. Whether we are planning to get away for several weeks, or just a day, is Jesus there as a part of our rest? Is our Lord there with us when we immerse ourselves in those, books, concerts, T.V. programs, or movies? Do we use our hobbies to distract our minds so that we don’t have to think about why we need Jesus? Do we sometimes indulge ourselves just to satisfy some sinful craving all the while never intending to include Jesus in that form of rest?

Our selfish striving fills us with the desire to do things on our own and leave Jesus behind. But without Jesus what kind rest do we really have? Sure we can rest our bodies and our minds but what good does that do us if we come back from that “rest” spiritually exhausted? If our consciences are burdened with the guilt of sin that is going to affect our minds and bodies. Without Jesus we have no real rest now, and no rest to look forward to in eternity. In fact without Jesus the only thing we have to look forward to is a spiritually lifeless existence now and an eternity of torment after we die.

God loves you too much to have you face eternity away from him. That is why God sent his Son to bring you real rest: The rest that only comes from the forgiveness of your sins. If we want to gain entrance into that perfect rest of heaven, we need to be perfect; we need to be sinless. The perfection we need only comes to us through a connection with Jesus’ perfect life. God sent his Son to take away our sins and give us his own righteousness. God covers our sinful lives with Jesus’ perfect life. Scripture tells us, **“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe”** (Romans 3:22). And faith comes to us through the gospel.

When we want to “get away” to get some rest we want our Savior to be there, so we can really rest. Jesus is there with us in his word. Where the word of God is there Jesus is. When Jesus is with us as we rest he gives us the chance to “decompress:” to speak to him about all the things weighting heavy on our hearts and minds. We can unload our cares, concerns, and sorrows on him knowing that he is going to take care of those things, so that we can rest. We can also share with Jesus our joys, our successes, and our happiness by thanking him for allowing those good things into our lives, even though we really didn’t deserve them. As we share with Jesus the ups and downs of our lives we can rest knowing that our Lord is going to work all of those things out for our good. Being in God’s word helps us rest knowing that Jesus is going to continue to care for all our needs and answer all our prayers. That’s real rest.

The best part of Christ’s rest is that you can enjoy it every day. Let your Lord daily speak to you in his word, then share yourself with him in your prayers and let him remove your guilt and stress. That is how you can have real, physical rest with Jesus.

But have you ever felt tired without being physically tired? Have you ever felt like you are

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worn out and had no energy even though there is nothing wrong with you physically? It's not just our bodies and our minds that get tired and need rest. That's why real rest only happens with Jesus because in him we find real spiritual rest.

Just like our bodies there are so many things that can wear down and weaken our souls and our faith. That's what Jesus saw as that crowd of people was approaching him: he saw people whose souls were weary and tired, and his heart went out to those people. We are told that Jesus **"had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd"** (v. 34a).

Without a shepherd sheep will wander into all kinds of trouble: eat things that are bad for them, they're going to get hurt by rough terrain, they'll be threatened by weather, and chased by predators. That is what this crowd was like. Spiritually they were like sheep without a shepherd: they were lost, wandering, tired, and even a little beat up spiritually.

But Jesus had exactly what these people needed: Himself! The Messiah: The Anointed Savior of the world! Even though Jesus was there with his disciples to get some rest his heart went out to these people. Jesus wants them to have the spiritual rest they need, **"So he began teaching them many things"** (v. 34b). Jesus loving heart of compassion causes him to share himself and his saving work with the people who were there. He was helping those people find real spiritual rest in him.

So what wears us down spiritually? Our sinful nature that likes to lead us into sin. The sins of others hurt us and affect our lives. The world's hatred of Christians often takes a toll on us. And Satan is constantly badgering us, and tempting us to question God and leave God. All of these leave us spiritually worn down.

But we don't need to live in a state of spiritual exhaustion because Jesus has what we need: Himself! Christ, our Good Shepherd, brings us spiritual healing and rest by telling us about himself. Through his word our Lord teaches us "many things." He teaches us about his Father's plan of salvation. Then he teaches us how he fulfilled that plan. Our Lord tells us how his perfect life was lived for us, how his death cancelled our debt of sin, and how his resurrection is the proof that we will rise from the dead. Jesus also lets us know that he is ruling over everything in this world as our Good Shepherd and King. He sees our harassed souls and he has compassion on us. Our Lord uses his words to lead us through the troubles and tears of this life. With his words our Good Shepherd leads us to that place of perfect rest that he is preparing for us. This is the rest our souls need: spiritual rest in Jesus.

But don't just save that rest for vacations. You can enjoy Christ's rest every single day. Every day we can confess our sins to our Lord. Every day we can hear of his precious forgiveness. Every day we can lay the burden of our guilt at his cross and know his blood has washed it all away. Every day we can be strengthened and encouraged in our walk of faith as we hear Jesus speak his healing words to us. He speaks of how he has made us children of God. He tells us how he has given us eternal life. Every day we can be reminded of how, through faith in Christ, we have a perfect spiritual rest waiting for us in heaven. Real spiritual rest only happens through faith in Jesus.

So the next time you're planning some time to get away and get some rest, don't forget to take Jesus along. Go with Jesus and get some real rest. Leave with your Lord all the burdens of your heart. Then trust that he will take care of those things giving you real rest for your body, your mind, and your soul. Listen to your Lord Jesus, and bask in the peace of knowing that one day you will enjoy an unending rest with him. Amen.