COME WITH ME & GET SOME REST

1. Jesus offered physical rest to his tired disciples
2. Jesus brought spiritual rest to troubled souls

How many hours of sleep do you get a night? Are you getting enough sleep? The experts break it down this way: Pre-school children on average need 10-13 hours of sleep. School age children (ages 6-13) need 9-11 hours of sleep. Teenager need 8-10 hours of sleep. Adults on average should get 7-9 hours of sleep. So, are you getting that much sleep?

And there are side effects that come from not getting enough sleep and rest. They say you will have difficulties in concentrating and you may even fall asleep during the day at work or school. Your emotions and moods will also be more erratic. I would say that if most of us were honest we would have to admit that we are not getting enough sleep and rest.

As we think about rest and sleep, we realize that Jesus also understood that our bodies need rest. God, who created us, also knows that our bodies can only go so long before they get tired. God wants us to be rested so that we can accomplish all the great things he has planned for us. Keep in mind that God is more concerned about spiritual rest than physical rest. As we hear the words in reading, we will see that Jesus will help us with both. That is why Jesus invites: **COME WITH ME AND GET SOME REST.** Jesus offered physical rest to his tired disciples, he brought spiritual rest to troubled souls.

The region of Galilee was swept by news that thrilled and shocked and stirred the people. Jesus, the prophet of Galilee, had seemingly stepped up his activity. Not only was he himself teaching and traveling vigorously, he had also commissioned the Twelve to go out two by two. Their call to repentance was backed up by the same power their Lord displayed - they too drove out demons and healed the sick. But at the same time the terrible news came from Herod’s palace. The proud and boastful king had yielded to Herodias’ hatred and ordered the execution of John the Baptist. In the middle of this joy and grief comes this calm and comforting work of the Savior.

We are told: **The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught.** The apostles reported on their recent mission trip that we heard in last week’s Gospel. The disciples preached repentance, as their Lord did. God gave his stamp of approval on their words by allowing them to do miraculous signs and wonders, the same signs that marked Jesus’ ministry. Clearly these men were his men; their message was his message. Just as clearly we see that those who go in his name are accountable for what they say and do as they witnessed in the death of John the Baptist who lost his life for standing up to sin and preaching the truth. The disciples returned and gave reports.

Jesus was dealing with excited men who had made their first evangelism visits and preached their first sermons. And he was also dealing with friends of John the Baptist who were grieving the death of their former teacher. Some were probably thinking: **If that is what happens to a preacher of repentance, do I still want to go out in public as a preacher of repentance in Jesus’ name?** Jesus would have to deal with both the experiences of their travels and the fears that threaten their souls.

**HE said to them,** **Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.** For there were so many people coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat. Counseling was simply impossible. Jesus’ headquarters-home in Capernaum was filled with so many people coming and going that there was not even a chance to hold a dinner meeting. So he invited his apostles to a more secluded place for some rest.

The rest Jesus offered the disciples certainly means first of all the kind of rest that
weary bodies and minds need after the physical and mental exertion of traveling and teaching. There are valuable lessons for us when we note that this rest followed their hard work. After work has wearied us, then comes the time for rest and ease.

We also should recognize that rest is not now a permanent state. The period of rest precedes and prepares for more work. The next order of business for these 12 was going to be pondering the needs of 5,000 supperless hearers. This perplexing mental activity was followed by carrying to them the bread and fish the Lord Jesus provided so miraculously. No, earth is not a place for extended idleness. Earthly rest restores the energy we expended in labor and reinvigorates us for continued labor.

Then we are told: **They went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. But many people saw them leave and knew where they were going. They ran there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.** The group of people from Capernaum followed. In all the cities along the way they added to their numbers. It did not require superior agility to keep up with the boat. After all, following the shoreline was the natural course for the boat. And the passengers in that boat were not striving for any speed record; they were seeking rest and private conversation with the Lord. They probably got more rest on the boat ride than at their destination.

Those who followed along the shore had a strong enthusiasm for Jesus. They wanted more fr him - more teaching, more miracles. But for many, their joy in him may have been only a shallow enthusiasm. After they were miraculously fed, it was their plan to take him by force to make him an earthly king. That is the direction their enthusiasm was taking. They should have listened more closely.

As we live on this earth we certainly recognize that God wants us to rest our bodies. He knows that we cannot go forever without rest. We are not helping ourselves and we are not helping those around us if we do not rest. Vacations, days off and planned rest are necessary as we prepare our bodies to do the work which God has before us.

Our text continues: **When Jesus stepped out of the boat, he saw a large crowd. His heart went out to them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He began to teach them many things.** It was rude of the crowd to impose on Jesus in Capernaum. It was rude of them to follow where others had been invited. Yet it was not rude treatment that Jesus returned to them. Jesus had compassion on them. **Undeserved love** is the basis for the Savior’s dealings with sinners, all sinners. Compassion and grace and a shepherd’s care are the gifts, the good news, that Jesus brings.

Let us use that well-understood idea of rest properly. Let us be sure our enthusiasm is directed to the Lord’s gifts, not just to our own ease. Indeed Jesus offered physical rest to his tired disciples. As they were tired from their journeys, spent from their preaching, and drained by the sad news about John, he offered them the rest and recuperation they needed.

This truth that earthly rest is not yet perfect serves as a transition to those other thoughts about rest - the perfect rest still to come. The 12 needed to hear of a better rest. Their earthly rest was fragile and vulnerable. Sheer numbers had taken away their rest in Capernaum. How much uneasiness filled their work reports as they told Jesus, not only of welcomes for their words, but also of rejection? After all, Jesus had prepared them for people who would refuse to listen. All their life there would come days when messages would come about the death of friends. All their life they would be dealing with demanding, discourteous actions by some of earth’s citizens.

The crowd that followed was also in need of rest that went beyond the usual food and shelter. Did they really understand why Jesus was important to them? If they were thinking of making him king so they could straighten out affairs in Jerusalem, what other incorrect ideas...
were they holding? To the spiritually needy - which is all people - Jesus gives rest far beyond physical rest. He has compassion. The simple answer of God for human weakness and inadequacy is his love. He will be our helper.

We have now reached the last half of our summer vacations. Have we taken the time to rest and relax as we recharge our bodies to go back to school and to make it through our long and hard winters? But amongst all of this earthly rest and relaxation we will do well to remind ourselves that there is never a time where we can take a break from the rest that Jesus offered to the people in our text and that he offers to all sinners. The rest he offers is the message that the burden of our guilt has been removed and that our sins have been taken away. Have we been taking the time in our busy schedules to find the rest that Jesus offers in his Word? Without God’s rest and forgiveness we will wear down spiritually. We will be weak and exposed the attacks of the devil and our sinful nature. Maybe we could put it this way. How regularly have we been in God’s house? How often have we come to the Lord’s Supper? When was the last time we opened our Bibles or read our meditations or other devotion book? If we have to think about these things, we have not taken the time to receive the rest that Jesus offers to us.

Not that I am wishing bad vacations on people, but if our earthly vacations fall short of perfection and we still had the time to find spiritual rest while on our vacation, then it was a very good vacation. It does not really matter if the mosquitoes are too plentiful and the fish too scarce, if we still kept close to our God of rest.

As Christians we can rejoice in Jesus’ gift of perfect rest! Viewing the wonders of God’s creation as we find earthly rest shows us the splendor and power he has available to show his love for us, but making sure we’re receiving the rest of God’s forgiveness is far greater. We find our rest in God’s compassion, in the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins and the sure hope of everlasting life. God invites us to come as often as possible to receive this rest – the rest that we so desperately need. The rest that God lovingly wants to give. Amen.

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