



THE ORCHARD VERNON HILLS

Rest Along the Way

Mark 6:30-44

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Introduction

- It has been my pleasure to get to know many here at The Orchard Vernon Hills.
 - One thing I notice in conversation is that many of us live full and busy lives.
- We are busy with the pressures of work and family life.
 - Many serve our church faithfully and tirelessly.
 - And some of you are just beginning to serve Jesus and his kingdom.
- In our high-speed age, I know we all feel pulled in so many directions that it feels exhausting.
 - And through sermons like last week, we know that the work Jesus has called us to do is important.
 - Jesus calls us to make disciples in Matthew 28.
 - Titus 3:8 reminds us Christians should "...be careful to devote themselves to good works."
 - 1 Peter 4:10 tells us to use our gifts, "to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."
 - And even handing someone a cup of water in the name of Jesus is kingdom work.
- But many of us are tired and busy, and thus conflicted as to how we can sustain a life of obedience at this speed.
 - How can I get my work done and still have energy leftover to minister to my kids?
 - How can I care for aging parents and still have time to serve the church?
 - How can I face the challenges of a new chapter of life and still be faithful to what God has called me?
- The temptations are many, but here are the extremes we might face.

- The first is to plow through ministry at the risk of burnout.
 - This is the person who puts their head down, chugs their fifth cup of coffee, and ignores all the signs they need a rest.
 - They may not say it but they believe faithfulness requires total neglect of self.
- OR
 - The other extreme is the mission abdicator.
 - When faced with the demands of ministry and life, this person is quick to pull back from serving Christ all together.
 - The work is overwhelming and it is easier to focus on oneself instead.
- These responses to the pressures of life and ministry ignore either the reality of our limits or the reality of God's calling.
 - Both of these are extreme responses, but I venture to guess you find yourself somewhere in between that scale.
- So how can we both serve Christ as he has called us to and sustain that work as limited human beings?
- I have found this passage in Mark 6 to be a surprising source of help in this area.
- What we see here gives us a picture of what a life of following Jesus will look like.
 - First, it helps us to see...
- **JESUS KNOWS OUR NEED TO REST (v30-32)**
 - *31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a **desolate place** and **rest a while.**" For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.*
- The apostles were empowered and sent out by Jesus in vs7-13 to do ministry.
 - So when the apostles came back, they were excited to tell Jesus all that had happened.
 - They saw people repent, freed from demons, and miraculously healed.
- Isn't it a joy to be sent by Jesus?
 - We all have a part to play in that kingdom work as a church.
 - When we see God working, it can be very energizing.
- But just like the disciples, we too can get caught up in the busyness of ministry.
 - There is so much to do and good kingdom work has no end in sight.
 - It could be easy to burn the candle at both ends and neglect ourselves.
- Jesus saw this in his disciples and knew they needed to rest.
- As joyful as it is to be sent by Jesus, isn't it wonderful He cares for you?
 - He knows your limits

- and he knows attending to our own souls matters
- not just for our sake but for the sake of the work we are called to.
- One of my preaching heroes is Charles Spurgeon in part for his amazing sermon analogies but also for his ministry capacity.
- But the talented preacher often took periods of rest because constant preaching, counseling, and administration wore him down.
 - In his lectures to his students, he reminded them,
 - “The bow cannot always stand bent.”
 - Exceptionally gifted servants like Spurgeon are still humans with limits.
- Even Jesus himself made it a habit to get away from time to time to sustain a life of ministry. You might love to serve others, but you too need rest.
- So what kind of rest did Jesus have in mind for his disciples?
 - Jesus suggested taking time away from the crowds in a desolate place.
 - Getting outside in nature and away from work is just good practical advice.
 - Even just 30 minutes spent resting outside cuts our cortisol levels in half.
 - And desolate places often help focus our minds on God.
- So crossing the sea of Galilee, the disciples planned to retreat to a desolate place near the city of Bethsaida.
- That was the plan, but things didn’t go according to plan.
 - People from villages all along the shoreline followed them all the way to Bethsaida.
 - Their little retreat was over before it even started.
- When I first read this account, it made me wonder, did Jesus make a mistake in his vacation plans?
 - Wouldn’t he have sovereignly known this crowd was going to show up?
- Jesus wanted the disciples to rest a while in a desolate place,
 - but he didn’t say how long that while would be or what that would look like.
- Now depending on the exact spot where the disciples landed, the people could have walked there in about an hour.
 - So that means, at best, Jesus and the disciples had a little over an hour to enjoy a restful, leisurely, uneventful boat ride away from the demands of the crowds.
- Thankfully there were no storms this time.
 - The disciples could say Jesus led them, “beside still waters”
 - The sea was a kind of desolate place for rest and an hour does count as awhile.

- But you might say, “An hour is hardly enough, right?”
 - Well I would argue God built into us the need for patterns of short rest.
 - We have a daily need to rest, and we have a built-in weekly need to rest as God intended in the sabbath.
 - Enough of these short rests along the way creates a sustainable life.
- This was the manner of Christ’s ministry: Long bursts of intense ministry sprinkled with small quiet retreats with his Heavenly Father away from the crowds.

So what does this look like for the busy, stressed-out Christian?

- First we need to trust Jesus when he reminds us of our limits.
 - We are not God and we only prove we are not God the more we try to be.
 - We will hit our limits the more we try to ignore them.
- Then Second, we need to appreciate and capitalize on the short rests Jesus offers.
 - A 30 min car ride, a walk around the block, fellowship time with your LIFE Group, a lunch hour in your bible, an early morning time of prayer.
 - And of course, resting with God’s people weekly on a Sunday morning.
- I like to imagine when we gather in this room we are all disciples in the boat together.
 - On the other side of this Sunday service is a crowd of demands and ministry needs, but for now, let us rest with Jesus in the boat.
- Jesus calls to us in Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."
- It doesn’t seem like much, but take these short moments throughout the week to rest with Jesus along the way.

- So Jesus knows we need rest, but strangely enough this passage also reminds us...

- **JESUS INTERRUPTS OUR REST (v33-37)**

- *34 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.*
- After planning this wonderful restful trip to get far away from the crowds, Jesus and the disciples pulled into shore only to see an even **bigger** crowd.
 - It’s almost comical to imagine.

- You can almost see the looks of the disciple's faces full of exasperation and utter disbelief as they docked the boat.
- "You've got to be kidding me."
- Have you ever had a vacation or, worse yet, a nap ruined by an interruption?
 - It can be heart breaking and rage inducing.
- This restful trip ended up being one of the longest days of ministry recorded, full of teaching and feeding over 5000 people.
 - But it didn't have to be.
- Jesus could have told the crowds to go away.
 - They could have kept sailing.
- Jesus knew the disciples needed rest **and yet** it was cut short, not by the crowds but by Jesus' compassion.
 - Verse 34 tells us it was his shepherd's heart that compelled him to stay.
- Why would Jesus cut short the rest they were going to get?
 - Doesn't he care about his disciples?
- Of course, Jesus loves his disciples.
 - But his compassion for his own sheep extends just as fully to the sheep without a shepherd.
 - He holds both our needs and the needs of others in his heart at the same time.
 - And sometimes those needs seem to conflict.
- Unlike Jesus, the disciples wanted to send the crowds away and get on with their vacation. (v35-36)
- Instead, Jesus gave an outrageous command in verse 37.
 - "...give them something to eat."
- I don't know about you, but if I were there, my patience would be running thin.
 - "Jesus, we haven't eaten and now you want me to feed others?"
- You see, **Jesus' outrageous compassion will sometimes test our devotion.**
 - Do you ever feel the Spirit of Christ interrupting your day and tugging at your heart to do something for someone else?
 - Perhaps The Spirit prompts you to
 - give to that missionary
 - Or go share the gospel with that stranger.

- Or sign up to serve in that ministry.
 - Do you ever try arguing with God to choose a different plan?
 - Sometimes His compassion just too inconvenient.
- **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** once said, “We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God.”
 - Now we will only allow ourselves to be interrupted by God if we share his heart.
- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ controls us, ...he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”
- So why should we let the compassion of Christ interrupt our rest?
 - Because the same compassion that interrupts you is the same compassion that rescued you.
 - How could we deny that love to those who need it?
- We were once lost sheep far from God and Jesus yet chased us down.
 - I’m so glad that Jesus bothered to interrupt His perfect existence on heaven’s throne to come to earth to die for me.
- There are lots of unworthy distractions we face on any given day,
 - but we who follow Christ should know that souls in need are worth the interruption.

Application:

- So what do we do when the needs of life and ministry interrupt our plans?
- First, let the love of Christ control you.
 - Jesus, your good Shepherd loves you dearly.
 - May that same love compel you to see souls not as interruptions but as sheep without a shepherd.
- Second, it’s helpful to surrender your day to the Lord first thing in the morning.
 - If Jesus is king of your day
 - and you expect unexpected interruptions,
 - you are less likely to be disappointed when they happen.
- Hold your plans with loose hands.
 - Its easier said than done.
- You can imagine while preparing to preach a sermon with a point titled “Jesus interrupts our rest.” that I would face a few interruptions.
- This Wednesday during the storms, a giant branch fell and cut all power to our house.

- This meant we were without power on Thursday which just so happens to be when I planned to get away from all the distractions to finish my sermon in peace.
- Its amazing how many needs arose that required my attention.
- I had to put a lot on hold that day but studying this passage leading up to this week had prepared my heart.
- It wasn't easy to hold my plans with loose hands, but being filled with Christ's compassion and expecting the unexpected prepared my heart to respond gently to the needs of my family in ways I would not have otherwise.
- Jesus knows you need rest, but the compassion of Jesus will interrupt your plans from time to time.

- You may accept that reality this morning, but you may also have noticed a problem the disciples ran into.
- They didn't have food to give the crowds.
 - And 200 Denarii was not enough to feed this many people.
- Even if we allow God to interrupt our plans, how can we give what we don't have?

That's where we see...

- **JESUS PROVIDES REST AS WE SERVE (v38-44)**

- ⁴² *And they all ate and were satisfied.* ⁴³ *And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish.*

- Jesus told the disciples to feed this mass of people and all they could find was some bread and some fish.
- In other accounts of this story, we find this wasn't even their food.
 - They had to ask a little kid to share it with them.
- The disciples were exhausted and hungry.
- And they didn't have enough resources as they stood in front of an impossible task.

- I wonder if you ever feel like that.
 - Do you ever look at the calling God has given you and wonder how He could ever ask you to keep going?
- You know you are called to serve, but it all feels exhaustingly impossible.
 - That spouse you've been praying for still isn't responding
 - That family member you love is running farther from God.
 - You have a child who demands your attention and drains you emotionally.

- You serve in a ministry that requires so much of your time.
- You can't imagine feeding others when you need to be fed yourself.
- It would be easier to focus on our needs instead.
 - Otherwise, how could God possibly give us **what we need** in the middle of all this work?
- But that's exactly what God does.

- Notice in verse 39 Jesus makes the crowd lie down in the green pastures.
- Once everyone was organized, Jesus broke the bread, said a blessing and started handing the food out to his disciples.
 - The disciples distributed the food that Jesus handed them, but when they came back Jesus kept handing them more food.
 - And after they distributed that food, Jesus handed them even more.
- Suddenly the entire crowd was eating their fill of bread and fish.
 - Verse 42 tells us "All ate and were satisfied".
 - What a miracle!
 - Jesus alone can save and satisfy the multitudes!
 - But that "All" includes the hungry disciples.
 - In fact, we are told that after all had eaten their fill, twelve baskets of food were left over.
 - Did you notice that's one for every disciple!
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- Imagine the sun has all but set as the disciples meet back with Jesus.
- After serving food to over five thousand people and collecting the leftovers the disciples plop down in the grass exhausted.
- But Jesus smiles at them and motions at the twelve baskets as if to say,
 - "See, I didn't forget about you. Sit, eat, and be satisfied."
- Brother, Sister. Jesus didn't forget about you.
 - In all the unseen service, in all the sleepless nights, and in all the thankless work, Jesus sees you.
- Hebrews 6:10 reminds us, "For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do."
- Not only did Jesus meet the needs of the crowd that day, but He also met the needs of his disciples.
 - And it happened as they served.
- Jesus knows you don't have enough to do the monumental task ahead of you, but he calls you to do it anyway.

- All you may have to offer him are two ounces of patience, five loaves of energy, and one last nerve.
 - But don't let that stop you from serving him.
- You can trust God to give you what you need as you do what he wants.
 - It wasn't the laidback vacation they imagined, but even while serving, the disciples were sustained and satisfied.
 - There is enough Jesus to go around to sufficiently save and satisfy the multitudes and you and me.
- As we trust God and faithfully walk in the work he has given us to do, we strangely find rest for our souls.
- So how do we experience this in our lives?
- When God calls you to do the impossible, Go to Jesus and obey one step at a time.
 - Go to Jesus, take what he hands you each day and use it to serve others.
 - Missionary Elizabeth Elliot once said, "Sometimes life is so hard you can only do the next thing. Whatever that is, just do the next thing. God will meet you there."
 - It's simple advice but one worth following when your task looks overwhelming.
- And then take heart that the one who calls you, sees you and will supply what you need.
- 2 Corinthians 9:8 says, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work."
 - You may not be able, but trust that Jesus is able.
 - He will supply what you need.
- Jesus knows you need rest, sometimes his compassion will interrupt that rest, but He can provide what rest would have provided as we serve.

Conclusion

So let me ask you this morning:

- How do you respond to the demands of life and ministry?
 - Are you prone to ignoring your limitations and need for rest?
 - Are you easily frustrated with interruptions to your plans?
 - Do you want to avoid the work God calls you to?

- Look to Jesus, your good Shepherd!
- Perhaps you have noticed throughout this whole passage a connection I have been making to Psalm 23.
 - I kept seeing it pop up over and over.
- I want take a moment as we close today to let the first part of this psalm sink into our hearts.
 - The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.
 - Jesus knows your limitations and your needs.
 - Jesus, the good shepherd has compassion on his disciples and the sheep without a shepherd.
 - He makes me lie down in green pastures.
 - Jesus brings us to a place of dependent rest and divine provision.
 - He leads me beside still waters.
 - Jesus gives us calm even for just an hour boat ride.
 - He leads us to rest along the way.
 - He restores my soul.
 - Even when we are called to pour out our souls in kingdom work, Jesus fills us back up again.
 - He alone can satisfy and give us what we need even as we serve others.
 - He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

We have a good shepherd who gives good rest as we do good work for his good name.

He is better than the best vacation. Find rest in Him along the way this week.