

# Come Away and Rest a While

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Psalm 23

Today's scripture is a story of the twelve disciples returning home to the faith community from which they started. They had all started out in the familiar company of Peter, James, John, and the rest of the disciples, who were like their family. Then they embarked on their journeys, bringing the Gospel message throughout Judea.

After long and arduous journeys they were finally ready to come back home again. They were ready to take off the dusty sandals and rest their tired feet. They were tired mentally, emotionally, and physically. There were drained disciples. They were exhausted after their various missions. And they were ready for home. I think many of us on a regular basis need a place to come back to, to be sustained and renewed, a refuge, a place to come home, to be anchored.

There is restlessness and weariness in this world. There is hollowness, a lack of meaning, there is something missing from so many. We need a home. Not just a physical home and the comforts of home, but a spiritual home.

When we come back to a familiar house of prayer, no one has to say anything. There is a deep and unspoken connection. We take comfort in our house of prayer. We take comfort listening for God's word, not only in scripture, but in our community, and within us. We listen for God's word in scripture and among us and within us. And that word sustains us.

Jesus had a word for each disciple individually. Jesus knew each one intimately. He knew each one's struggles. In their fatigue, in their anxiety, in their exhaustion, he spoke to each one and gave each one a word. Jesus knew firsthand, the great demands and immense consumption of energy God's mission and ministry require. Throughout the Gospels the crowds press on Jesus and Jesus himself becomes weary, needing replenishment and rest. Six different times in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus retreats from the crowds to rest and find solace with God and with the twelve disciples.

We all need to get away from the fray to be with loved ones and to reconnect with the center of our faith.

Every place the disciples had gone on their journeys, the crowds pressed in. The demands were more than the disciples could address. The disciples were so consumed by all the demands that they had, at times, failed even to eat.

Seeing the disciples' weariness, identifying with their exhaustion, Jesus said to them, "Come away and rest a while."

These most welcome and refreshing words, given by Jesus to the twelve, are words equally welcome and refreshing for us today.

Today we live in a much different and more complicated world than Jesus' first followers. We live in a world that is often moving much faster than we are, and it's hard to keep up. We live in a world that pulls our lives in numerous directions. We live in a world where more is expected and demanded of us than

we are often capable of doing. We live in a world where people are most often disconnected from their families, from their extended families, and from one another.

We live in a world of fast paced change and upheaval in people's individual lives. We also live in a world of fast paced change all around us, a world of environmental devastation, homelessness, and terrorism.

We live in a cordless world, a world in which we, as people, have become detached from the very spiritual source, which gives us life. The ultimate challenge for each one of us today is the challenge of surviving and even thriving in a cordless world.

We clean our teeth with a cordless toothbrush. We shave with a cordless shaver. Our life at home and at work functions on cordless appliances, cordless cell phones, and laptops. Cordless controls operate our entertainment centers; they open our garages and car doors.

Actually the moment we are born, we ourselves become cordless. We are detached people. When the umbilical cord is cut we become cordless. How often in our cordless world have we believed we can live our life separated and detached from our source of vitality? When we were infants in the womb our source of life and vitality was our mother. Now as we reach adulthood, a vital source of life and vitality is our faith community.

When an infant is disconnected from its mother it wails. When appliances are disconnected from their power base they lose all their vitality. When we are disconnected from our faith and our community we too are cordless.

Then when the adversity comes, when the Crisis comes we aren't prepared to deal with it. We don't have a reserve that can keep us afloat and give us strength.

Our faith and our community of faith is that reserve. It is that refuge. It is that power base that revives us again and again.

Like the disciples, we all become drained. We all become like our cordless appliances that are spent and have no more power. It is then that we need to reconnect. It is then that we come away to be with our community and to renew our faith. It is then that we come away and rest a while in the presence of our loved ones and our loving God.

One of our purposes as a church and as the people of God is to provide that center, that power base, where people can come and be revived again...

That center where we are sustained by a word called scripture, a word called community, and a word called The Holy Spirit.

All over this world there are weary people barely holding on to their meager savings or to their marriage or to their mission in this world. These people need a place to go to be revived. They need the body of Christ to say "come away and rest a while." Come away and have your soul nurtured in a loving community.

In a world of discrimination and violence we count on one another and God. That's powerful.

Come away from fatigue, restlessness, and exhaustion, and find abundant life.

We all know what happens when we leave the cordless phones, tools, and appliances off their power bases. They become weak, powerless, and unable to do anything.

How can we survive in a cordless world? How can we become charged persons when we've lived so long in this demanding and draining world?

An answer is found in the simple words of Jesus. Come away by yourselves to this refuge called The Good Shepherd and rest a while. Find sustenance.

There is power in a worshiping community of prayer and fellowship and song. We yearn for it as our ancestors yearned for it.

A worshiping community can be a refuge; it can be a place of replenishment, a place where we find family—where we come home—where we find our center. That's what we need in our cordless world. We need connection.

Praise God that we have refuge. Praise God that there is a community here called The Good Shepherd that sustains us.

Come away and rest a while.

Amen.