



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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August 6, 2006
9th Sunday after Pentecost
Mark 6:30-34
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Jeremiah 23:1-6
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 23
Second Lesson: Ephesians 2:13-22
Gospel: Mark 6:30-34

Jesus' Passion for Compassion

What are you passionate about in your life? What is it that gets you going, gets you fired up that when the topic comes up in a conversation it is kind of hard to shut you up and it's kind of hard for anyone to get a word in edgewise? What is it that makes you redecorate your house a certain way—Honolulu blue and silver maybe?—for the Lions? What is it that really gets you going? It might be a lot of different things for a lot of different people. It might be sports for some people. It might be the Packers—62,000 and however many there minus one were really crazy about the Packers last night. Maybe it's your family. Maybe you are incredibly passionate about your children or your grandchildren and people know when they see you coming that they are going to hear about your grandkids because you just can't stop talking about them.

What is it that you are passionate about? It is going to be different for all of us, but I think it is really interesting, it's really nice, it's really comforting today to come together and hear what Jesus is passionate about—what he gets excited about, what he gets revved up about and what Jesus is passionate for is compassion. That is what we see in this reading from Mark. Jesus has a passion for compassion. The thing that I think is fascinating about it is that it is not just compassion in the big things. His heart goes out to us when we are sick or in great difficulty, but we see Jesus' passion for the mundane everyday things in our everyday life in our reading. I really think that is a great comfort for us as we go through life because as we consider what is in Mark 6:30-34, we see that Jesus offers rest to tired followers. His passion for compassion goes as far as just saying, "Hey, let's get away from it all and rest for a little while." But then when he sees that large crowd that is harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd, he has compassion and he makes time for those who have no rest, true rest, spiritual rest.

This glimpse at Jesus' heart—we talk about it as heart. The Jews talked about it—the word that they used for compassion really says your guts go out to someone. We say our heart goes out to someone. It's the same kind of thing, just a different location in the body, I suppose, but we are talking about the same thing. We see Jesus' heart. That is how we speak of it. Shortly after he had sent out the Twelve—remember last week—he had sent out the Twelve two by two. They went to towns and villages. He had given them authority to heal and authority over demons and they were to teach, repent and believe the good news that the kingdom of God had arrived. They came back and you can imagine how the words came spilling out of the two by two by two about what had happened. No doubt they talked at times of how they had to shake the dust from their feet like Jesus had said because they were rejected as a testimony against the people that rejected the message. But they also got to report to Jesus and

talk about the way the Lord had blessed their efforts and people believed and wanted to learn more and how they had healed people or various things God had done through them. You kind of wonder if they were stumbling over each other trying to talk about what God had done through them, cutting in on each other, interrupting each other because they were just so excited and had to tell Jesus about what God had enabled them to do. With that kind of nervous energy they probably needed rest to begin with. You know how it is after you are all wound up about something and then when you stop and the adrenaline stops flowing, you need to go and sit down and fall asleep for awhile in front of golf—at least that is what I do every Sunday.

But not only that, we are told that the crowds were pressing on them. They saw Jesus and they had heard no doubt of Jesus expanding his ministry there in Galilee by sending out the Twelve two by two. Now the crowd is on him and there are so many people there demanding of their time, demanding their attention and Jesus doing those things that they don't even have time to eat. Not only is there this nervous energy, now there is no food, now they are getting really tired, really run down, really worn out, so Jesus says, "That's enough guys. Let's get away from it all. It's time for some rest." He makes a point of taking these men who had worked hard and served him faithfully. They had done the task God had given them, and now he says; "Now it's time to rest. Now it's time to recharge. Now it's time to get ready to go out and serve again, but it is important right now that we rest."

It sounds like the most rest they got was on the boat ride, however, because the people went ahead of them. What happens when they get to the northwest shore, northwest from Capernaum is the feeding of the 5,000 coming up later in this chapter where there are huge crowds there.

Think about what this tells us about Jesus. Jesus sends the disciples out to work, but then he says, "Now it's time to rest." His care for them, his concern for their well-being extends not just to, "Okay, now you know who I am and now you are saved and now your sins are forgiven. Now you are going to go to heaven. Now you are on your own." It goes beyond that to, "You guys are really tired. Let's rest." That same kind of compassion in these everyday things, the things we think of as being everyday, is how deeply and how much our God loves us who are here today. That is how he loves the whole world. Think about this—God gives us work to do. He calls us to do work, whether it's being a mother, a father, an employer, an employee or whatever you find yourself at in life—a child, a student, a teacher—whatever it is, God calls you to work and to work hard and to serve faithfully with every gift he has given you in every one of those areas. That is our vocation in life so to speak—whatever it is, do it with the best of your ability.

But he is not saying it is sin to rest. In fact, he is telling us rest is important. In fact, if we never rest we are probably bordering on the idea that God can't get things done unless we do it, unless we do the work then nothing is going to happen. Then we are probably crossing over to sinful lack of trust in God. Of course, on the other hand if we say that God will take care of everything and we are not going to do anything, then we are tempting the Lord our God and we are crossing over to sin in the other direction.

God tells us to work and when it is time to work, to work faithfully, and when it is time to rest, to rest. He is not talking here about rest for our souls. He is talking about rest for our bodies. As you and I work in our life, our God loves us so much that he is concerned that we take the time to just sit down and rest and recuperate so that we can go back to being the best father, mother, son, daughter, employer, employee, whatever the case may be, that we can be.

But you know how it is when you get run down and you don't rest enough. It is a little harder to be a good spouse, isn't it? You start snipping at each other. You start snapping. You hear words that are said innocently and you think they are accusing you of something. Do you think maybe God knows us—that because he made us he knows what we are like if we don't get our rest? We are going to be more and more sinful? We are going to forget about serving our God and we are going to focus on ourselves and we are going to take everything the wrong way and we are going to just get ourselves in trouble because we are so tired because we didn't take the time to rest. Maybe that is why God tells us this is important—rest.

God has a passion for compassion and it extends down to our physical needs. I think that is a glorious truth to know because if God is concerned about us just getting good rest, we know that he is going to be concerned about the much more important things as we see also in our reading from Mark. When he gets to the other side, he sees the fulfillment of what we heard in our First Lesson. We heard from Jeremiah about the unfaithful shepherds who don't feed God's people pure, spiritual food and he warns those unfaithful shepherds. Then he promises that "the" faithful shepherd would come who would be our righteousness, who would be our perfection. Here is the fulfillment—Jesus sees these people. His heart goes out to them—not because they are tired, not because they are hungry which they would soon be—but at this point in time, his heart goes out to them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. They didn't have the knowledge of what makes them right with God. They didn't have the knowledge of what Paul talked about when he wrote to the Ephesians in our Second Lesson. They knew they were separated from God because they knew their own sin. They knew that they couldn't keep God's laws in all its details. They knew that God hated sin. They knew they were sinners. That makes you pretty harassed. That makes you feel pretty helpless.

So God comes himself as the Shepherd who teaches them many things as Mark tells us. He taught them later that he was the Bread of Life—that whoever would eat of him (that means who would believe in him) would have eternal life. They would have peace between them and God. God would take away that wall that separates them. God would bring them close and make them members of his own family—not because they were good, not because they tried hard, not because they were wonderful, upstanding people, but because God is gracious and merciful and he loved us in our greatest needs and took away our sins when we could take away none of them.

He makes time for these people who had no rest. He and his disciples were going to go get some physical rest, but the crowds were there, the opportunity was there, now was the time to seek the Lord while he may be found. This was the day of salvation for those people that would hear and believe. So he sets aside this time for physical rest

and goes about his business of sharing his love and his forgiveness in the message of the Gospel.

He makes time for us too. He offers us spiritual rest through baptism. Hopefully we are all reminded of our own baptism. As we think about it every day when we sin and when we worry too much about getting things done and we don't trust in God, that in our baptism we were baptized into Christ's perfection and our sins were washed away. We were clothed with his righteousness.

He gives us that rest through the Lord's Supper where we receive the very body and blood that was given and shed for us and it says to us, "You are forgiven. There is peace between you and me. I have reconciled you to myself." He gives us the Word that we can come together with other Christians in Bible studies, in home devotions, in our own reading of God's Word, and we can find this rest, this peace, this knowledge that we don't have to spend our lives spitting and sputtering and worrying and fretting. We can live confidently knowing that we have God who loves us enough to love us in the little things and to love us in the big things.

This is our God. This is the comfort he has for us. This is why we gather together to worship him. This is why we sing these songs to praise him for doing these things and to remind us of what he has done.