

2 Samuel 7: 1-14a (Psalm 89: 20-37); Ephesians 2: 11-22; Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56

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You may have recognized the first half of today's Gospel reading as the introduction to the story of the feeding of the five thousand, which is then quickly followed by the miracle of Jesus walking on water. And yet, for some reason, those who created the series of readings that we follow chose to skip over those miracles here. To me, it almost seems intentional, sticking with the mundane and more human aspects of this story, which remind us of the value of rest and Sabbath time.

I don't know about you, but I've always tended to jam-pack my life with things. For many, that seems to have slowed down a bit during Covid, but many of us still have pretty full schedules. I can't help but notice that, as we've come out of our third wave, and we're moving toward a way of living with Covid in our world and our lives, people are beginning to be busier again.

I know that many people have been restless and lonely during Covid, and that many people struggled with the challenges it produced. I don't know very many people at all who didn't have at least something they were looking forward to that had to be postponed, altered, or even outright cancelled because of the pandemic, and that certainly takes its toll. I don't say this to overlook those challenges, but, in some ways, the pandemic did force us to slow down, take a step back, and often to take a look at our lives and consider how we really want to be using our time. It shone a light on a lot of the cracks of our society, and the instability of the world as we knew it. We never really know what's going to happen, and we cannot predict the future. This seems to have a lot of people questioning their present, and how much they were overworking themselves for things they really didn't enjoy or value. I know I've heard a lot of people retiring or changing jobs in the last 17 months or so, and I don't think that's a coincidence. I also heard a stat recently that a study was done and about 40% of people are unhappy with their jobs and are considering quitting in the next 6 months. People seem to be feeling overworked, in a world that never seems to slow its pace, and many are

questioning the value of what they've done or are doing. Some are also learning to say no to things, when they previously may not have. I know I've been terrible at saying "no", which leaves me running around doing a lot of things at once, and sometimes stretching myself pretty thinly. This seems to be what the disciples had gotten caught up in as we heard in our gospel reading today, and thankfully Jesus notices and takes action.

We're told the disciples didn't even have the "leisure even to eat." Talk about being busy! So Jesus calls them away from that, telling them to rest for a while. Not necessarily for a long time, not forever, but enough to rejuvenate themselves. The disciples would have been no good to anyone if they burned themselves out, and neither are we. Sabbath time is an important part of caring for ourselves, so that we can care for one another and all of God's creation.

I've been hearing a lot more about Sabbath time lately, and its importance, and how it's something that many of us fall down on quite a bit. I don't think it helps that our church is one that is built on sayings like "Idle hands are the Devil's work", which encourage us not to stop moving, and, really, often not to even take a break. That's not a healthy way to be, and, in fact, is ignoring one of the Ten Commandments, that we are meant to rest, just like God did on the seventh day. I can't help but think that there's a reason so many people are talking about, writing about, and studying the lack of rest in our world these days, and that maybe it's time we start to take that seriously. It seems like, particularly with all the stresses of the pandemic, many of us – myself included – are starting to get burned out. Not resting enough can take a toll on our mental, spiritual, emotional, and even physical health – and that's not something to take lightly! Sometimes we need to remember to take care of ourselves in the same way we would care for a small child: eating properly, going to bed at a decent time, getting fresh air and exercise, drinking water, and so on. It isn't always easy or fun, but it's what's best in the long run. And, it's what the disciples in our reading today weren't doing for themselves. So, like a loving parent, God steps in and reminds them of the importance of resting in God.

Our first reading today also reminds us of the importance of rest. King David had rest at the beginning, but once he felt settled into his house, he wanted to create just as solid of a house for the Ark of the Covenant – or the Ten Commandments. It's a very human thing to want, to celebrate all that God does by creating something to honour God. But, if we're not careful, what once may have been something to praise God, like building a temple to house the Ark of the Covenant, can become more like an idol, something we praise and celebrate instead of God. Sometimes it can even lead to us trying to pin God down, fitting God into something we can understand, and forgetting that the Spirit needs room to move in and through our lives. As humans we can lose sight of God's work in the world around us, throughout time, connecting it instead to a specific time and location. Our second reading reminds us that WE are the temples in God's world, and the temples in which the Holy Spirit dwells, built upon everything that came before us, with Christ as the cornerstone.

So, when David is told through the prophet Nathan that this isn't the time to build a temple or a house for the Ark of the Covenant, that it will be his offspring who will do this instead, this story serves as a reminder that we don't have to do it all. David did some wonderful things, and he's well-known and remembered for much of what he did. But this passage reminds us that sometimes it's enough to sit back, appreciate what we've done, and let the next in line take over. David's son was going to be the one to build the Lord's house, and that's wonderful. David just needed to sit back and let the next generation take over. It can be hard to let things go, because they may not be done exactly the way we would like, or the way we would do them, but sometimes that's actually part of God's plan too!

Here we are in the peak of summer. We have been blessed with some pretty good weather and many of us have undertaken projects or summer pastimes, or have visited people, keeping ourselves busy in what is often a slower time of year. Before you know it, it will be Labour Day, and things will start to get back into the swing of the school year and another fall season. Particularly this year, with the

anticipation of things returning a bit more to normal in the fall, we will probably be pretty busy soon. So maybe we should take this time of rest, if we're able to have it, a little slower this year. What our readings have done for us is to remind us that it all doesn't have to be done today or even tomorrow, and that we do need time for ourselves and need to listen to the voice of God, to guide us not to a place of tension but to a place where we are right with ourselves and right with God's world. That's not to say we should kick back and watch the world go by, more that we should, by times, in all the busy-ness of our lives, take that moment to celebrate our blessings, to pray for blessings upon others, and to breath in the breath of God.

Amen.