

**Worship Service for July 18<sup>th</sup>:** 8th Sunday after Pentecost

- **Old Testament:** 2 Samuel 7:1-14a
- **New Testament:** Mark 6:30-34, 53-56
- **Psalms:** Psalm 23

**Announcements:**

- July 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>: Vacation Bible School for St. George's.
- July 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>: Vacation Bible School for St. David's.

**Sermon Title: Sabbath Rest!**

Come away to a deserted place all by yourself and rest a while. Jesus made that statement to his disciples after they had returned from their mission trip. A few Sundays ago, Jesus had sent his disciples out to preach in different towns and villages and had asked them to dwell where they were welcomed and shake the dust off their feet where they were not.

They have now returned from their mission trip and are giving Jesus feedback of all they had done and taught. And Jesus invites them to come away to a deserted place all by themselves to get some rest. Rest! Such a beautiful word to hear especially when you are exhausted. And yes, Jesus, the one who would move around teaching and healing, invited his disciples to rest. And he even told them to go to a deserted place all by themselves and rest.

We are living in a culture that glorifies busyness and it's easy for us to hear people explaining how busy they are, having meetings back-to-back, as one of my friends will say. Of course, it makes people feel important that we have something to do to the point where we are so busy.

Yet, Jesus invites his disciples to go away to a deserted place all by themselves and get some rest. That is the kind of Saviour that we are dealing with; that is the kind of King that we are serving. This is not the first time that rest is being mentioned in the Bible. From the very beginning with the creation story, we are told, that God, the Creator of the heavens and the earths; the One who spoke the world into being rested on the seventh day.

In our Old Testament passage, we are told that the Lord had given king David rest on every side. And David now decided to build a Temple for God. But God told the

prophet Nathan with the following information: “Are you the one to build me a house to live in? *I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle.*”

In the Ancient Near East, it was a cultural norm for kings of the pagan nations to build temples to their gods. They gained prestige from it because their names were written down in history as those who had built a temple for their gods. Our passage doesn't tell us why David decided to build a temple for God, but God turns him down and says, “I will build a house for you and not the other way round.”

We might be asking ourselves what has this story got to do with rest? The thing is David wanting to build a temple for God was his way of trying to reward God for all the things that God had done for him. It is not mentioned in the passage but maybe, just maybe David was trying to copy the pagan kings and do something big that would put his name in history as someone who built a temple for his God. God turned him down but permitted his son to build a temple for Him. Could it be that God detected David's motives and they were not intended to bring glory to God? When Jesus did miracles it was out of a place of compassion and not for any form of glorification. We might sometimes start out with the sole purpose of helping out and being useful, but we sometimes don't realize when the praises get to our heads.

There is something about the glorification of busyness that is very ungodly. We are trying to state that we are getting things done by ourselves and not acknowledging God as our helper, the ever-present help in times of trouble. We are trying to say or to prove that we can do whatever we want, however we want by our own strength. We are attempting to take the glory for things that God has helped us to achieve. And above all we are trying to act as though we are indispensable; nothing good can happen without our presence, skills and intelligence. Sometimes we are afraid to rest because we are thinking to ourselves that what will happen if I am not there to direct, give orders or show how it is done? Committing ourselves to too many projects and wanting to help everyone is to succumb to a yearning. A yearning of a satisfaction that only Jesus can provide.

Dorothy Bass puts it this way, “To act as if the world cannot get along without our work for one day in seven is a startling display of pride that denies the sufficiency

of our generous Maker.” To take time away, then, is an act of trust. Trust of the employees, volunteers and people around you who will keep things going, and trust in God that He will continue with His oversight and provision.

Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is to get some rest. We need the reminder that we are the created and not the Creator and that those things that we are doing have been there before and will still be there even if we are not around. And this is not to say that you or your input is not valued. It is to liberate you and let you know that it is ok to get some rest.

Acknowledging that we need rest and getting the rest we need reminds us that we are dependent on the Lord our Shepherd; the Lord who neither slumbers nor sleeps. It might be for a few hours, a day, the weekend, or several weeks. We see in our passage that Jesus didn't have much rest as the people followed him. No matter how short or long it is, we need to be sensitive to our bodies and accept when we need rest.

Our rest might be different from that of others. For David he needed rest from his enemies and constant war and that was granted to him. For someone here this morning, it could be rest from too many engagements, or from trying too hard, or from fighting life's challenges. For another person it is letting go your will and letting God have His way in your life; accepting the salvation He is offering you.

Jesus is calling on us to balance our busyness with renewal and restoration and that can only happen if we rest. There is always going to be things to get done and people to serve. Our spirits need rest and renewal, and our Creator knows it better than us; He created us. Jesus is commanding us, He is commanding you – yes, you, to rest. And he is not only commanding you to rest; he is offering you food and healing. Come today and find rest in the comforting and loving arms of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Surrender at his feet and let him refresh your spirit, soul and body.

Are you tired? Are you exhausted? Are you weighed down physically, spiritually, mentally or emotionally? Jesus is telling you today to rest. Jesus is telling you today, to come away to a deserted place, all by yourself and get some rest. He is reminding you that He will always be there to feed and to heal those who are in need of food and healing. Rest in the Lord today; rest in his presence. Why? He gives us the reason in Psalms 23 which I will read in The Passion Translation (TPT):

*Yahweh is your best friend and your shepherd. You always have more than enough. He offers a resting place for you in his luxurious love. His tracks take you to an oasis of peace near the quiet brook of bliss. That's where he restores and revives your life. He opens before you the right path and leads you along in his footsteps of righteousness so that you can bring honor to his name. Even when life's path takes you through the valley of deepest darkness, fear will never conquer you, for you already have him with you!*

*His authority is your strength and your peace. The comfort of his love takes away your fear. You'll never be lonely, for he is near. He provides you a delicious feast even when your enemies dare to fight. He anoints your head with the fragrance of His Holy Spirit; he gives you all you can drink of him until your cup overflows. So why would you fear the future? Only goodness and tender love pursue you all the days of your life. Then afterward, when your life is through, you'll return to his glorious presence to be forever with him! Amen.*

### **Prayer**

Good and generous God, in Jesus Christ you came to us, promising life in abundance. We give you thanks today for the abundant gifts we receive in him—the assurance of your love day by day; the relief of your mercy when we recognize our own failings; hope to sustain us when things seem bleak; and peace that comes when we trust ourselves to your eternal keeping. These are the gifts that matter, O God, so for all these gifts and other blessings we recognize around us, we give you thanks in these moments of silence:

Generous God, today we pray for all whose lives seem empty of joy— because the going is tough, and friends still seem far away, because their hearts are filled with disappointment, because their sorrow and grief are keen this day. Support each one in your abundant compassion.

Generous God, we remember before you those whose lives are empty of peace and hope—because they are struggling with illness or disability, because they are powerless in the face of violence or other forces beyond their control. Especially today we pray for all those facing discrimination because of their culture or their religion, and those still struggling to overcome the effects of the pandemic. Send your peace and promise with signs of new possibility and real hope.

Generous God, we remember before you those for whom life is frustrating—because they are without work, because they have made poor choices and cannot find a way forward, because what comes next does not seem clear. Support each one in your abundant mercy and lead them in new paths.

Good and generous God, fill us with energy & compassion to reach out to those facing difficult times. May we become the gift we have received in Jesus, for it is in his name we pray, saying the words he taught us:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

### **Benediction**

Go now with your trust and humble surrender to the good shepherd. And may God be at your side, even in valleys of death. May Christ Jesus be the cornerstone of your life. And may the Holy Spirit abide in you and tend you with love and mercy all the days of your life. May you experience Christ's rest in your spirit, soul and body and divine rest in eternity. Amen.