

Study following Sunday July 18th 2021

Prepare: Think about when you've had important plans interrupted and how you responded.

Praise: Spend time thanking God for different seasons of service, some that are very busy and others where there is more time for reflection and recuperation.

Passage: Read Mark 6.30-34

Ponder: In our passage today we get a wonderful glimpse of Jesus and his close group seeking to find a balance in their ministry, and not especially succeeding!

The disciples arrive back to report to Jesus how their mission has gone. They've just been out to the villages and communities around, sharing the good news, healing people and driving out demons. Although we don't get a sense of how this mission went, we are perhaps relieved to find them all returning without any of them having lost their head, as John did in the previous paragraph. Notice in verse 30 the disciples are referred to as 'apostles' which means the 'ones sent out'. This word is rarely used but is an important aspect of their ministry. I am reminded that at the end of each Sunday services we are sent out, often with the phrase 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord'.

- Reflect on how you feel 'sent out' as a disciple of Christ.

In verse 31 we see the busyness that surrounded Jesus and the disciples, so busy that they can't even stop to eat. We might imagine the disciples in various states of mind as the ministry continues but they can't stop to satisfy their hunger.

- How might the disciples have responded? Perhaps they were too busy to notice, or maybe they were used to more flexible times with Jesus - how might you have coped in that situation?

We then see Jesus having compassion on this close group. The quiet, solitary place he mentions is the same word for wilderness that Jesus went out to before beginning his ministry (Mark 1.12). We may consider the wilderness as a grim foreboding place but here it becomes a place of replenishing and strengthening.

- Where are the places we may choose to go to 'retreat'?

The group get a boat ride in peace but the quiet time does not last long before the people find them, in fact we read the the people had got there ahead of them, walking all the way round to the other side of the lake.

It often seems to me that when I try to take some 'down time', when I try to pause my activity, then my mind begins to whirr with busy thoughts and ideas, as if they were waiting there for me to stop. It is at these times that I am reminded that waiting until I am desperate for a retreat is not a good pattern or rhythm to get into. So personally I try to put in short times each week, and longer times each month, to pause and allow my thoughts to flow in different directions. Finding time to stop, pray and reflect does not always come easy to us, but it is essential for our Christian journey, and so we need to discipline ourselves in order to find a good balance and rhythm. The final verse of our chapter precedes an amazing miracle by Jesus but first we hear of his great compassion for the people, as he notices how like sheep they are, and in need of a good shepherd.

- See John 10.1-18

- Read Psalm 23 and use it to inspire prayer for yourself and others

Pray: Pray for all who are needing a real break this Summer season. Pray for those who we know who are worn out at this time, for them to find a helpful place and time that re-energises and replenishes them.