

Sermon #37  
Mark 6:30-34  
April 26, 2020

## Come and Rest

What a beautiful, quiet place of rest and renewal! Sonscape Retreat, nestled in the natural wooded area near Woodland Park, Colorado, is a wonderful place for weary, tired ministry couples of the gospel. Rachel and I attended Sonscape Retreat in the spring of 2007, a quiet, peaceful retreat center complete with dining hall where meals were provided, a recreation room, individual cabins, hot tub, and many hiking trails, with the picturesque Pike's Peak scenery every day.

We had experienced a number of years of "on the go ministry" in planting a church in Ecuador and then leading a missionary student center at Asbury University with many active college students. It was all great, wonderful ministry, but ministry that also takes a toll on one's spirit and emotional stability. And we were also looking for guidance in ministry.

We flew to Denver and then drove through Colorado Springs and up to Woodland Park, finding the camp just outside of the town up a country road. We joined with another six or seven couples for the evening meal and met our counselor guides that week who were such wonderful caregivers, teachers, and listeners. The whole group had several sessions with them, and each couple had personal times with them as well. We also learned more about our personalities through the Myers Briggs Personality Inventory. They were skilled in helping us to apply that learning. It was also a joy to spend time with other ministry couples in getting to know them, laughing with them, and praying with them. But most of all it was time in God's Word that comforted and strengthened us. I remember Larry, our guide, quoting often the word of Jesus from Mark's gospel 6:31, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

We were thankful for that time of rest and much guidance came out of that time as well, as I sensed in particular that God was guiding me back into pastoral ministry in the local church. Then just a few years ago, we followed that special retreat with another Sonscape Retreat, this time in Georgia, experiencing much of the same renewal there with more ministry couples and retreat leaders.

Thank God for times of rest and renewal. We all need them, not just ministry couples. In this world of hustle and bustle, we all need to step back and take time to renew our souls, our emotions, and our physical bodies – everything about us. Now it is even more important than ever to take some time to rest and refresh of our spirits and bodies during this time of great uncertainty and much fear due to the coronavirus pandemic. Let's revisit the moment when Jesus called his disciples for a time of rest and see he might say to us today as well.

I. Jesus and his disciples needed rest. All humans need rest.

In Mark's gospel, chapter 6, 30-34, Jesus called his disciples to come away to a quiet place for a time of rest, as we've just read. Why did they need rest at that time? What was going on?

The story begins with Jesus' disciples returning from ministry to report on what had happened, much like missionaries return to their sending churches to update them on the ministry where they live and minister. Matthew (10) and Luke (10) also relate similar stories of Jesus sending his disciples out, and Luke tells us that they return rejoicing because they were enabled to cast out demons in Jesus' name (Luke 10:17). Here in Mark's gospel, earlier in verses 6-12, Jesus sent out his disciples to minister in his name – to preach and to heal and to cast out evil spirits. And that is exactly what they did. Furthermore, there had already been much ministry activity with Jesus prior to him sending them out (chapters 3-5). Thus, all three gospels indicate a rather challenging, fruitful, and probably exhausting time of ministry.

Now the disciples return from their fast-lane ministry adventures. Jesus must have noticed a weariness in his disciples. And furthermore, Mark makes it clear in v. 31 that there "were so many people coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat." That's especially when ministry or any job of business becomes overwhelming to the point of complete exhaustion. That's when Jesus invited them to go away with him to a quiet place for rest.

It's like those Southwest Airline commercials when someone is over worked and commits a grave mistake because they're doing too much. Then the obnoxious voice is heard, "You wanna get away?" The person nods, "Yes."

Let's look a little closer now at Jesus' invitation in v. 31.

- a.) It is an invitation, a call. With one main imperative verb, Jesus calls his disciples to come away from their daily routine. That's what it takes – an active choice to take the break. And sometimes that's the hardest part of all.
- b.) Jesus tells them to "Come with me." This is personal. This type of retreat is with Jesus, not just for oneself. Before they went out to minister two by two without Jesus. Now, they are going out with him. Jesus' presence always bring renewal.
- c.) They were to come "by yourselves," Jesus indicated. No one else was invited. When families get away, when married couples get away – no one else is invited. And maybe it's just a personal retreat for you. No one else is invited. That's important too.

- d.) Jesus invited them to “a quiet place.” The next verse calls it a solitary place. Quiet is the key word here. It cannot be noisy, busy, but rather relaxing and peaceful. True rest occurs in a quiet, peaceful environment.

Rachel and I have also gone for personal and family retreats at a retreat house south of Nicholasville Kentucky, which is actually called, “A Quiet Place.” It’s a well-constructed two-level home out in the middle of nowhere with about six bedrooms, a living and dining room, a spacious kitchen, and much outdoor area for hiking and relaxing. Maybe Jesus had something like that in mind? The key word in Jesus’ invitation comes now at the end of the sentence.

- e.) “Come” he says, “and get some rest.” Rest is what they needed. Weary, tired ministers of the gospel need rest and relaxation. The human body was not made for continually pushing forward without rest.

## II. Jesus called his disciples to come and rest with him in a quiet place.

The concept of rest forms major themes throughout all of scripture. The Greek verb, *anapauo*, means “to give relief, to refresh, to relax, or to take one’s rest, especially in the Spirit of God; and the noun is *anapausis*, which means rest, as in ceasing to do something, or halting some activity in order to be refreshed or renewed. The word occurs fifty-two times in the NT and its equivalent Hebrew forms are found 274 times in the OT. And there are numerous Hebrew words meaning rest.

The theme of rest begins in Genesis 2:2 when on the seventh day, God rested from his work. God showed the example and set the Sabbath day to be holy to him, as a day of rest for all humans. The Sabbath was made for us – so that we could cease from our hard labors and rest from them – and most importantly rest in God with Jesus.

So, there is the theme of rest from labor all throughout Scripture, but also rest from an anxious, disturbed soul, a rest from evil spirits, a rest from irritations, a rest as in repentance from sin, a rest in the future hope of Jesus’ return and much more throughout Scripture. I guess that means that rest must be pretty important to God, because he knows how very important it is for us – for our well-being. He set the example and we must follow.

Applications: Now let’s stop here a moment. How are you relating to all this call to rest and relax? Let me see. Perhaps, some of you may be saying to me, “Pastor Randy, I’ve been doing nothing but resting over the past several weeks. I lost my job and I’m ready to get back to work. Don’t even mention the word rest to me.” Okay, I hear you. We’ll certainly pray that you get back to work soon. But maybe you need rest for your anxious spirit today, or your weary soul. It’s very hard not knowing how you will make ends meet for your family. Jesus calls you to rest in him today. Take that heavy burden and give it to him. Come, and get some rest in Jesus today.

Others of you have been working practically night and day, non-stop taking care of sick people whether in the hospital or at a nursing home, or at your own house or someone else's. Your nerves are about shot. You worry about the health of the ones you are caring for and you worry about your own health. "Will I be next?" you fear. You've seen others suffer so badly from the coronavirus or whatever illness they have and you worry that you are next. "Come away with Jesus today and get some rest. Let him take your fears and worries. You may not be able to get away. Few of us today can actually get away, but find some time, perhaps in other parts of the house or outside, or take a drive in the car. Get away somewhere, your own little closet, whatever. Meditate on God's Word. Read good spiritual books or even just read a novel. Write in your journal. Come and get some rest with Jesus."

Some of you say, that will never work. I've got little children running all over the house. There's no peace and quiet here. I've got my job work to do and I'm watching kids, trying to keep them at peace with each other. Yes, that is an extreme multitask operation for sure, including all the chores and everything else that needs to be done. Jesus says the same thing to you today. "Come away with me and get some rest. Take a walk with me. Lock yourself in your room with me for a while. Pray to me, read my Word and let it penetrate to your weary soul. Yes, spend good quality time with the children, but also have a time out with them and read God's Word together. Rely on others to help. Call people in our church who may be willing to help out. Don't do it alone. So, come and get some rest today, every day.

There are many more wearisome, fearful situations today – fears about loved ones who are sick and far away or are in nursing homes or hospitals or prisons and can't be seen. Many are suffering in our prisons. Teachers and students are sad not to be in the classroom and not to see each other. Seniors are missing proms and graduations. And yes, many have lost their jobs or at least temporarily. Either way, it's a massive, heavy weighted burden. And it's not only right around us, but all over the world. The inhabitants of this planet are all very weary at this time. We all need to come away and rest.

Listen to the wise counsel of what a fellow believer has learned during this pandemic: She writes this in an on-line article:

"In my earliest days confined to my home during the coronavirus outbreak, my uneasiness only escalated during endless searches for coronavirus news updates. Like my fellow Christians, social distancing and necessary regionwide church closures meant I could not quiet my internal tumult by sitting in a familiar church pew and listening to wise religious counsel."

"Comfort arrived when I took it upon myself to delve more deeply into the familiar lessons of my Christian faith. Focusing on Biblical and spiritual texts has left me invigorated by the belief that practicing and nonpracticing Christians alike can help one another draw closer to our maker as we navigate the unknown."

“Modern life is marked by perpetual motion as we multitask and fill up blocks of time with endless to-do lists and extracurricular activities. As the coronavirus forces nonessential activities to a halt, increasing numbers of people are spending their time in isolation, faced with a new reality of stillness and solitude.”

“In my own busy life, I have often longed for this kind of break in the madness. Finally faced with such a pause, I find idleness intensely uncomfortable as uncontrollable and scary events unfold around me. Here, the Bible provided an important answer in Psalm 46, verses 1: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. ... Then God says in verse 10, ‘Be still and know that I am God.’”

“I focus on renewing my unshakable trust in God and relinquishing my need for constant activity as I embrace the blessing of having time to make memories with my family while we stay home to minimize the spread of this deadly virus.”

## Conclusion

So, wherever you are, whoever you are, no matter your situation. The invitation is the same. Listen to Jesus’ words this morning. They are for you and for your benefit. “Come and get some rest – emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual.” For all needs, come to Jesus and get some rest.

Take a moment right now, to reflect and make a plan for your personal retreat this week. It may involve others to help you. It will involve your calendar. You are valuable to God. Take the time, somewhere, in someway. Let him refresh your weary soul. Come and get some rest.