

## **When the World Is Too Much With Us ~ July 19,2009**

Mark 6;30-34; 53-56; Psalm 23

When I pack my clothes for a trip by air, I am very orderly and concise and everything is in its place in my suitcase. I feel my mind is in order, too, and that “All’s right with the world.” One of you picks me up and delivers me to the airport on a nice tidy schedule.

When I travel by car it is a very different story. I find myself, up to the minute of departure, tossing all sorts of odds and ends into my vehicle. Odds and ends I will never need on a trip that is usually of short duration. These car trips are usually little escape adventures and I discover, as I make ready to go, that my mind is not in order and that I cannot wait to simply close the car door and be off. Most often the world has been too much with me when I escape for a day or two and I need a change of pace.

It seems that those of us engaged in ministry have always found that there are times, even if we love our calling and our people, that we need to escape. Too many little details have cluttered our lives and we need to find some time and space apart. We need to reorder ourselves to rediscover what it is that is important in life and what it is we can let go. One of my colleagues is preparing to set off on a three month sabbatical for such renewal and reflection,

Jesus urged his disciples to hop into a boat and get away from the people who had been following them around hoping for words of wisdom and for healing hands. Our scripture reading tells us that the disciples had no time to eat, so many were coming and going. So, we can imagine them willingly accepting his invitation to set off for a lonely place for some R&R.

But, they were well known and recognized and they did not even find respite on another shore. Soon the disciples were surrounded by people who needed them. Jesus, knowing the need that pulled him in every which way, continued his ministry of teaching and healing. He knew those around him needed a guide, a shepherd.

One of the stories of the feeding of the multitudes takes place following this reading. This was a wonderful miracle of sharing—a time in which everyone sought to minister to everyone else and, so, there was more than enough food to go around. Sharing is a very big miracle for all of us. It requires that we decide others are as worthy as we are and that we reach out a helping hand to them. We are told that when all had been fed, the disciples set off again in a boat for a distant shore, while Jesus sent the crowd on its way. He caught up to them by walking on the water.

When they completed their journey, once again they were surrounded by masses of people who had heard of the miracles they had performed and who needed their presence. Their work of ministry continued.

Jesus had to be exhausted by all the work he had to do. But, he accepted his mission willingly believing he was doing the will of God. He, too, sought times apart when he could meditate, pray and rest a bit. Without this renewal, he seemed to understand, that he would be of little use to anyone. His closest followers did not fully grasp what it was he was about—this must have drained him. The human need he had pressing in on him had to be even more exhausting. If you recall, in many healing stories he would feel the

power go out of him. This kind of drain on anyone, emotional, mental and physical eventually reaches the point of total exhaustion. There is a time to step aside and let life, as we know it, move along for a bit without us.

Maybe that's why we have the summer months—a chance to step aside and find some renewal.

When we discover the world is too much with us we lose a sense of direction and perspective. We are so involved in our busy-ness that we neglect to set aside time for a little peace and quiet—a time to be just with ourselves and with our God. I have known people who are unable to sit a bit and work on discovering just who they are and where they are in life. Some have even told me that they cannot bear to look at who they have become. So they busy themselves living their lives through the lives of others, never really taking a break, never letting themselves go. Never fully embracing all of life. Keeping so tightly scheduled that they never act in a spontaneous manner. Filling their lives with little bits and pieces and never having any room for the larger things that really matter. Never realizing what it is that really matters.

There is a little story I came across the other day that reminds us that we need to stop every now and then and reflect on what it is that gives life its value and importance.

NO ROOM IN THE BANK was told by Steve Goodier in his online column *Life Support*.

“Is your life full and busy? If you're like me, maybe it is TOO busy. Sometimes I fill my life so full doing things I think I SHOULD do, I don't have time for the things I WANT to do, even if some of those things are important. It seems that I have a thousand deadlines to meet, and too often I can't find enough time to write, I skip my exercise routine, or I neglect uninterrupted time spent in solitude and meditation.

But it helps to remember a story about a young girl and her bank. The little girl's father had just given her a silver dollar to put into her bank. She excitedly ran off to her room to "deposit" the coin. However, in a few minutes she returned and handed the silver coin back to her father.

"Daddy," she said sadly, "here's your dollar back. I can't get it into my bank."

"Why not?" her concerned father asked.

"It's too full," she said, obviously disappointed.

Her father accompanied her back to her room and, sure enough, her bank was too full to accept even one more coin. It was stuffed with pennies.

Is your life ever like that bank? So full of errands, obligations and activities of no lasting value, that there simply is no room left for what is truly important - the silver dollars?

Author Grenville Kleiser once said, ‘To live at this time is an inestimable privilege, and a sacred obligation devolves upon you to make right use of your opportunities. Today is the day in which to attempt and achieve something worthwhile.’

Have you made room for a few large coins in your bank; for something you believe to be worthwhile? If not, you may have to take out a few pennies, but I suspect you will never know they are gone.”

Jesus had the ability to discern what the important things in life were. He could not be bothered with the trivial matters--the little pennies that filled up the time and lives of so many around him. He noticed when his disciples were becoming tired of the many duties they handled and he knew that there was precious little time for them to step aside to sift and winnow all that was going on to discover those things that had the greatest value. There were probably many times when he sensed the world was too much with them and with him. Times when he might have said, "Come away, catch your breath, reclaim all in life that has the greatest importance to you and then return to doing our Father's business." Then all will be well. All will be well.

There is a little hymn that sings:

"Behold us, Lord, a little space from daily tasks set free,  
And met within thy holy place To rest a while with thee."

Heeding these words may make all the difference.

-- Amen