

Some Rest With A Test

Luke 9:10-17

Let's look at verse 10 where we note the disciples were given a deserved rest.

A. It Was A Deserved Rest – v. 10

Last week we looked at the 12 being sent out on a solo flight having been given the twofold mission to heal people of diseases and demon possession and to proclaim the gospel. They could do so because Jesus had given them His power and authority and so they went out into towns and villages. We don't know how long this mission took, but scholars estimate that it was over a period of several months and at the conclusion we note that when they returned to Jesus they reported everything that they had done. I wonder if they were like a bunch of school children returning from a field trip to the zoo excited about their experiences, everyone talking enthusiastically at the same time sharing all they had done in the power of Jesus.

Such an experience is not only exciting it is also exhausting. Those of you who have children will remember the times you took them on outings for just a day and how excited they were before and during only to have them fall asleep in exhaustion driving home.

Mark's account indicates that Jesus took them to a quiet place so they could get some rest. Jesus saw they were tired and needed to get away.

George Whitefield once wrote “Lord, I am tired in your work, but not tired of your work.”

A couple years after moving to Camp Mom took over the kitchen on the East Side. She was a bit apprehensive because it was a jump from preparing meals for a family of seven to feeding around 150 at each meal. It wasn't only the increase in number, there was also a time schedule to keep. Breakfast had to be served at 8a.m. Lunch was at noon and supper at 5:30. Breakfast couldn't be ready early otherwise the oatmeal would be cold and the toast hard when campers came through the line. Food had to be prepared so that there was plenty to go around. No one ever went hungry for lack of food at Camp unless they didn't like what was served.

It meant that Mom had to get to the kitchen around 6 to turn on the ovens and get things rolling, staying till about 2 after lunch clean up and prep for supper. She would get home for a couple hours and back up around 4 to begin supper. She did that for almost 30 years before she had to hang up her apron. She had done it so long, she could look at the menu and know how many #10 cans of green beans she needed, how many loaves of bread for grilled cheese sandwiches or how much oatmeal to mix up. Cooking became a science to her. She was amazing not to mention a really good cook. There was always enough for seconds for those who wanted more and there was always some leftovers, even Camp's delicious sticky buns. Uncle Johnnie used to say that if you feed campers really well, they'll listen better in Chapel. Should I order pizza?

We come this morning to a very familiar passage of Scripture. With your Bibles open, turn to **Luke 9:10-17** and the feeding of the 5,000. Here's our two points to consider this morning.

It was an interrupted rest

It was an intentional test

I. IT WAS AN INTERRUPTED REST – v. 10-11

I think it was in college I heard a speaker say it's better to burn out than rust out as a Christian. After 25 years of ministry I have come to learn a Greek word for that – baloney. Some pastors and even some Christians think they aren't serving God unless they have something going every night of the week – go, go, go, do, do, do. When I was first in ministry working with youth, it wasn't uncommon to go a couple weeks without a day off. Keeping up

with teens schedules is a challenge. I once went 45 days without a day off. It was like a badge of honor, look at me, I'm a super servant. God must be so pleased. That, my friends, is not healthy and shouldn't be the expectation of Christian ministry. We need time to balance ministry with rest.

I've learned that it's not the race, it's the pace. There must be balance between ministry and rest. An engineer who worked for GM in Pontiac once told me that even machines aren't made to run 24/7. A machine also needs downtime.

Some of you have said to me, I wish I could do more and you're schedules are already packed. Don't feel guilty if you can't do more, but sometimes it's a matter of prioritizing what's important and letting some things go. Some of you have been doing ministry for a long time and it's okay to rest a spell. But rest doesn't mean retirement.

The disciples had been busy in ministry and Jesus took them to a remote place to give them some time to energize their physical and spiritual batteries. Leisure isn't laziness, it's rekindling the fire within to serve better. Some people burn out to the point of not ever doing another thing. Go and rest.

Vance Havner has rightly said "If we don't come apart to rest, we'll just come apart."

Jesus saw their need for a deserved rest. BUT...

B. It Was A Disrupted Rest – v. 11a

There is a saying you have no doubt heard. It says "there is no rest for the weary." It's the idea of having to continue to press on, to keep going, keep doing because there is more work to be done. Some people think that if they don't do it, then it won't get done. They had travelled to a town called Bethsaida, to a remote area somewhere outside the town because it says they went to a desert place.

The word means a place that is uninhabited not that it was barren. Let me remind you as well that Peter, Andrew, and Philip were from this town. That will come into play in a moment.

No matter how hard they had tried to get away for a time of respite, the needy crowds had the paparazzi out looking for Jesus and when they found Him word got around quickly. Matthew notes that Jesus and His disciples had hopped in a boat and headed across the Sea of Galilee again and that people from the coastal towns followed on foot around the lake.

I imagine folks from Capernaum headed out on foot and came to the next coastal town and asked if they had seen Jesus land there. When it was confirmed that no one had seen Jesus's boat they went to the next town, this time with a bigger crowd and then the next town and so on, until they found some kid walking up the road with fishing pole in one hand and a few fish on a stringer in the other. Hey kid, have you seen Jesus land in a boat at your docks? He would have been with 12 other men in a boat with the name Heaven Sent. And the kid gives a description of the boat and the disciples and the crowd says yea, that's the one.

You know I'm just making that part up, right?

The point is that the crowd had needs they wanted Jesus to take care of and they sought Him out.

Would you agree that there are always needs people want Jesus to take care of? So they followed Him on foot until they found Him and any rest the disciples had hoped to get was now disrupted. Remember we talked just a few weeks ago about Jesus' mother, Mary, and His brothers came to take Jesus away because they heard about his frantic schedule. Jesus' ministry hadn't let up.

Most of you have heard by now that Robyn has taken a new position within her company. Something I won't miss, in this new position are the

phone calls at 1 or 2 or 3 a.m. from employees who can't make it to work for any number of reasons. They disrupt my beauty sleep.

Jesus took them away for some rest. The crowds followed until they found them.

Here's my point about this folks. Seek Him while He may be found and we can seek Him with any and all needs especially the need to fill the spiritual void for salvation. Here's where their rest ends and the disciples are probably thinking "here we go again."

C. It Was A Departure From Rest – v. 11b

Look at the verse. It doesn't say that He sent them away and told them to come back after their vacation was over. He didn't tell them to show a little common courtesy and respect their time, call and schedule an appointment.

"He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing."

Scripture says all those who come to Him He will in no wise cast out. He's not going to turn anyone away. Every ministry opportunity was precious to Jesus, a time to meet some need. Healing was merely the means to an end, the sharing of the gospel. Mark 6 notes that Jesus saw them as sheep without a shepherd.

Sheep without a shepherd wander around.

Sheep get into things.

Sheep get lost easily.

Sheep are helpless and Jesus saw an opportunity to minister to them and our text tells us that He **"welcomed them"**. It's a word that means He accepted them. Matthew uses the word compassion and means to be moved in the inside. The dictionary defines it as having sorrow for the sufferings of others, accompanied by the urge to

help. Jesus didn't just pity them because of their needs, He acted in some way to meet those needs. But that's the thing about Jesus. We often read in the Gospels that Jesus had compassion for the needy.

Matthew 9:36-37 – "When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore, to send out workers into His harvest.'"

Matthew 15:32 "I have compassion on them..."

Matthew 20:34 "Jesus had compassion on them..."

Mark 1:41 "Jesus, moved with compassion..."

Mark 8:2 "I have compassion on the multitudes..."

Luke 7:13 "He had compassion on her..."

Do you think Jesus had compassion for people, for those in need? And when He died on the cross for us do you think it was duty or was it compassion?

There was a departure from their rest because Jesus welcomed them so that He could tend to their needs.

Hebrews 4:15 says He sympathizes with our weaknesses. He knows our frailties and He showed compassion to them.

Alfred Edersheim in his classic work *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* wrote "It was the depth of longing and intenseness of pity which now ended the Savior's rest."

I can't tell you how often I have prayed to have more compassion but then miss the opportunities to show it because I either ignore it or don't see it, too consumed with my own needs or too busy with my own agenda.

A song that has been on the Christian radio charts for a couple years was written by Brandon Heath.

Give me Your eyes for just one second
 Give me Your eyes so I can see
 Everything that I keep missing
 Give me Your love for humanity
 Give me Your arms for the broken-hearted
 Ones that are far beyond my reach.
 Give me Your heart for the ones forgotten
 Give me Your eyes so I can see

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With what eyes do you see those around you?

But the disciples didn't see it that way. They deserved rest and the crowds disrupted that rest. Even Jesus departed from their time of rest by receiving, welcoming, helping them. And we'll see in a moment that it wasn't just a handful of people. Our text tells us that He did two things, things that were a part of His ongoing ministry. He met their physical needs by healing them and He met their spiritual need by teaching them. Often times the greater spiritual need is overshadowed by the physical need. From the perspective of the people, they thought they only had a physical need. From the perspective of Jesus, He knew they had a greater spiritual need and meeting the one gave authenticity to the gospel which could meet the other.

Here is something we at times miss and the disciples missed it. *God sometimes sends us to a remote place so that we can see His power at work.*

How many of us have felt that at one time or another or on multiple occasions God has sent us to a remote place and we missed the purpose for being there? Yes, the disciples needed rest, no doubt about it. That's why Jesus took them there, but there was something greater that He wanted them to see and they were oblivious to it. It was an interrupted rest. So, let's look at an intentional test.

II. IT WAS AN INTENTIONAL TEST –

v. 12-17

A. It Was A Problem That Was Aggravating – v. 12-13

It was late in the day and the disciples came to Jesus having made the decision that the ministry shop needed to close so that the people could be sent home. You can just hear their reasoning: "After all, Jesus, You have been at it all day. You must be worn out and the people need to go find lodging and food. "

We learn from verse 14 that there were 5,000 men. This didn't include women and children, so the number could have easily been 10,000 or more who were demanding time with Jesus. John 6 gives us a little more detail that may help us understand where this crowd came from. He adds that the Passover festival was near, so most likely many in the crowd were people traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration.

Where Jesus saw the disciples need for rest, He also saw the multitude's need for refreshment. But the disciples wanted them sent away with the excuse that it's been a long day for them, it's late and they're probably needing to eat and get some place to stay for the night. Notice their own aggravation is couched in concern for the multitude. "Lord, we're concerned for them too. They need to get going if they're going to get a decent meal and bed. But they were really only thinking of themselves.

How often do we hide our selfishness by expressing concern, concern that really pushes away the need?

Jesus didn't tell the disciples that they were right and the time had just gotten away from Him. He didn't apologize to the crowd and tell them they were on vacation. He didn't tell the disciples to check around and see who brought food and see what local stores could handle a massive food run.

Instead He said to His disciples **"You give them something to eat."**

Just pause for a second and let that sink into your noodle. The crowd wasn't to go buy, beg or borrow food. **"You, disciples, give them something to eat."** I'm going out on a limb here, but making an educated guess, I don't think that's what they expected or wanted to hear. I'm sure they were trying to wrap their arms around what Jesus had just told them to do. Jesus knew they didn't have any food. He knew they didn't have any money to buy food for that many people. Remember there may have been over 10,000 people. I can picture the disciples huddled in a group trying to figure this one out. Judas Iscariot who kept their common purse reached into the back pocket of his tunic and opened up the pouch to show that they had no money.

Matthew the former tax agent whipped out his abacus and calculated the cost of a loaf of bread multiplying it by the estimated number of people and concluded that it would take more than 8 month's wages.

Remember I said that Philip was from Bethsaida. In John's account Jesus asked Philip where they could buy bread for the crowd and Philip responded by saying that even 8 months wages wouldn't buy enough to satisfy the crowd. "You've lived here Phil, where would you send them?"

If you work or if you worked, add up in your mind 8 months wages. It was a sizeable amount and to the disciples it was an enormous problem and they were aggravated both by the crowd who interrupted their rest and by Jesus who had just given them an impossible task.

Now, let's do a quick review.

Two weeks ago we learned *that if God brings you to it, He will bring you through it.*

Last week we learned that *when God gives you a task, He will give you the tools to do that task.*

Verse 13 gives an important point. It's an impossible task and I think we would all agree that it was impossible. We can't do it.

How many times have we been given a task by the Lord only to respond that it's impossible? It can't be done. That phrase is a faith buster.

God gave Moses a task at the burning bush. Moses came up with excuse after excuse as to why it was impossible, but he eventually went. When he got there it didn't go quite as Moses thought it would and he complained some more – "see God, I told you it was impossible."

Multiple times he used the excuse that he couldn't speak well enough to stand before Pharaoh. Finally in **Exodus 7:6** Moses willingly obeyed, and he was 80 years old. How long will we come up with excuses for the task God gives us? Trust and obey.

We just read in John that Jesus already knew what He was going to do. Go back there and look at verses 6.

John 6:6

John 6 also tells us that Andrew brought a boy to Jesus. In the Gospels we find Andrew is the one who is bringing people to Jesus. He brought Peter to Jesus and here he brings a little boy. "Hey Jesus, I've been out working the crowd and I met little Simon here. His mother packed him a sack lunch. It has five little barley wafers and a couple of pickled fish." But then he also chimes in with the impossible magnitude of the situation. "Lord, it's all I could find in my search to see if we could feed this crowd. This is only a meal fit for a boy. It certainly won't feed a multitude. It won't go far."

Let me ask again, what task has been given that seems impossible so you have answered the Lord with multiple excuses as to why it can't be done?

I don't have the money.

I don't have the time.

I don't have the skill.

I don't have the desire.

I don't have.

I can't. I can't. I can't.

I think "I can't" is another way of saying "I won't."

Let's take a look at how Jesus responds.

B. It Was A Problem That Was Alleviated – v. 14-17

Let's go back to a verse we considered last week.

9:1

Now let's read **verse 10** again.

They were told by Jesus that He had given them His power and authority to heal diseases, cast out demons and preach the gospel. They did and then came back and reported everything that they had done and taught in that power. The stuff was still fresh on their minds, yet they chose to ignore or forget everything they had just experienced because the problem before them was too big for them. Well, duh! Of course it was too big for them. They were trying to come up with every conceivable way to figure it out and they forgot about the very one, the only one who could resolve this problem. They forgot to look at Jesus. Where they saw a problem, He saw a plan. Where they saw defeat and despair, He saw victory. They were overwhelmed, He was optimistic.

Warren Wiersbe writes “In the crisis hours of life when your resources are low and your responsibilities are great, it is good to remember that God already has the problem solved.”

Remember at the announcement of the angel to Mary that she would conceive the Christ child and she questioned the angel as to how that would happen and the angel said “**Nothing is impossible with God.**”

Moses asked God where they were going to get enough food to feed some two million people in the wilderness and God provided manna every day for 40 years so that everyone could eat.

Isaiah 46:9 “Remember the former things, those

of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.”

I Chronicles 16:11-12a “Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always. Remember the wonders He has done, His miracles...”

If the disciples had remembered at the end of the day what they had been talking about at the beginning of the day, they would have remembered the power of Jesus.

The disciples said “send them away.”

Jesus said “seat them. Have the crowd sit down in groups of 50.”

Great lessons of faith are learned in the moments of absurd commands.

Noah, build a boat.

Moses, throw down your staff.

Israel, cross the Red Sea.

Joshua, march around a fortified city.

Gideon, lead an army of 300.

Peter, walk on water.

Have the people sit down.

When they were all seated, Jesus took the food and looking up to heaven gave thanks and broke it. He gave some to each disciple who then took it to the groups for them to eat with 12 baskets of leftovers.

Now notice this in **verse 17: “They were all satisfied.”** That word doesn't mean that they all had just enough to take away the hunger pangs. It is a word that was originally used to describe feeding animals going to market. It meant to fatten them up. It referred to animals gorging themselves. So when it says they were satisfied, it reminds me of Thanksgiving dinner and eating more than I should.

What a great lesson for the disciples to once again see that nothing is impossible when Jesus is in it, so when a difficult task is given to us and we begin to add up our resources remember to include Jesus. If He has asked us to do something you better believe that He already knows what He's going to do.

What might God be asking you to do that may seem impossible?

What might God be asking your family to do that may seem impossible?

What might God be asking our church to do that may seem impossible?

Are we willing to trust God that He has a plan and a purpose for it and that He knows where the provisions will come from?

Remember that nothing is impossible for Him.

If He gives you a task, He will also give you the tools.

If He presents a problem, He is the provision.

Now there is something else that He wants teach the multitude. His provision of food was more than just feeding hungry bellies. It showed Israel that He was sufficient to meet their needs. But it was even more than that. John 6 continues by noting that Jesus is the Bread of Life, the one through whom we can have everlasting life. What's interesting as you continue to read in John 6 is that after this many followed Him no more. They were only looking for Jesus to meet physical needs and didn't care about their spiritual need. They sought a miracle for their hunger but Jesus knew they really needed a miracle for the heart.

Do you know Jesus today? If you come to Him, He will not cast you aside
If you do know Christ, is He asking you to trust Him with something impossible?

Folks, the disciples did not look at the crowds in the same way that Jesus did.

They saw the crowd as a nuisance. He saw them with a need.

They were critical of the crowd. He was compassion ate.

They were weary by the crowd. He welcomed them.

Their hearts were bothered by them. His heart was burdened for them.

They saw a problem. He saw a provision.

If He brings you to it, He will bring you through it.