

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, July 17-23 (B) – Mark 6:30-34; 53-56

The Choices of Discipleship: *Healthy or Unhealthy?*

Focus Question: *What does it mean to be a healthy disciple of Christ?*

word of life

“[Jesus] said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’”

Mark 6:31 (NRSV)

Read Mark 6:30-34; 53-56

Earlier in the sixth chapter of Mark, Jesus had sent the disciples with authority to cast out demons. They went in pairs and were able to do much good and cure people. The disciples returned from these travels, gathering around Jesus to share stories of their ministry.

Wisely, Jesus invited the group to retreat to a deserted place for rest. They needed time away from those in need, so they might have vitality and strength to continue to minister. None of them had time to eat, let alone rest.

1. *Do you sense the disciples were open to retreating to a deserted place?*
2. *What is helpful about a retreat?*

The disciples and Jesus traveled by boat to the deserted place, but many in the crowd recognized the direction the boat headed. So, the crowd hurried by foot and arrived ahead of the disciples. Thus, by the time Jesus got to the shore, there was a great crowd waiting for them. Consider the effort made by the crowd to be close to Jesus. The possibility of a retreat vanished before it had a chance to begin.

3. *Imagine the reaction of the crowd when Jesus appeared.*
4. *Imagine the reaction of the disciples when they saw the crowd.*
5. *How could Jesus keep his perspective when he was faced with such need?*

Instead of being irritated, disappointed, or overwhelmed, Jesus had great compassion. The crowd appeared to be like sheep without a shepherd. They were hungry and thirsty, looking for someone to feed them and bring healing. Jesus responded, feeding them through his teaching. Later, he would feed them with fish and bread. (Mark 6:30-44)

6. *Close your eyes and imagine the scene. Describe it.*
7. *What does it mean to be described as sheep without a shepherd?*
8. *Why did Jesus have such compassion for the crowd?*

The assigned lectionary text skips over the two miracles of Jesus: the feeding of the 5000 and walking on the water. Take time to read through these stories (Mark 6:35-52) to understand the context of the ministry of Jesus. The disciples witnessed one miracle after another. (Next week, there is a shift to the Gospel of John, including the story of the feeding of 5000.)

Eventually, Jesus crossed over the lake to the opposite side. (Mark 6:53) Again, Jesus and the disciples were surrounded by a crowd. Wherever Jesus traveled, people yearned to be healed, begging and hoping to touch his garments. All who touched even the fringe of his cloak were healed. It is no wonder people surrounded Jesus, waiting to be restored to health.

9. *How could people not believe Jesus to be the long-awaited savior?*
10. *Why would someone choose not to become healthy when given the chance?*

word among us

The house of my soul is too narrow for Thee to come in; let it be enlarged by Thee. It is in ruins. Do Thou restore it.

--Augustine

Our lives can get so busy that we spin out of control. We become human doings, rather than human beings. The disciples were involved in exciting ministry, healing people as they traveled through the villages. They didn't even take time to eat.

1. *Can you relate to these disciples?*
2. *Describe times in your life when you were too busy to eat.*

Jesus invited the disciples to join him on a retreat. He sensed they needed time away in order to continue ministry in the future. He chose a deserted place for the group to gather.

3. *Where do you go to find a deserted place?*
4. *What are your experiences or impressions of participating in a retreat?*
5. *What are the benefits of a retreat?*

Consider planning a retreat with your faith community. It could be simple, primarily spending time in prayer and Bible study. Allow plenty of time for people to unwind from their busy schedules by walking, sitting outdoors, or resting. An extended Sabbath of a retreat can restore the spirit as God intended. People can return to their normal lives with renewed vigor and vitality.

6. *What opportunities are available in your setting for a retreat?*
7. *If none come to mind, where might you find a deserted place for rest?*

The disciples and Jesus must have been a bit overwhelmed to cross the lake, intending to enjoy a retreat, only to find a crowd waiting for him. Yet, Jesus did not appear upset but instead had compassion on the crowd. These were individuals who were seeking health and healing in their lives. They realized Jesus had the gift of restoration for them. Jesus responded by teaching them and offering them care. There is something fundamentally healing for us as we read of others who sought Jesus and were healed.

Consider those areas in your life needing healing by Jesus. Take a moment of silent prayer as you return to Jesus for healing. In many ways, times of extended silent prayer can become a mini-retreat to restore our spirits until we are able to intentionally get away for a longer period of time.

8. *What are some choices you can make for health?*
9. *How does a healthy lifestyle reflect well on Jesus?*

Prayer

Spirit of God, send your healing touch to sooth my spirit, calm my heart, and restore my energy.
Amen

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 9: 2b-7

last word

This week, find a deserted place to pray and rest.



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