

18 July 2021

Rhythm of Rushing and Resting

Introduction

Jesus said to his followers: 'Come away and rest a while.' Let us come into the Lord's presence now, away from the burdens and stresses of life. Come with open hearts and receive the rest that Jesus offers – to restore our souls and equip us for whatever comes next.

Gathering Prayer

O God, you are our shepherd. Your care and compassion were shown in the life of Jesus. We ask that, this very day, we may experience the rest you offer, the peace that can restore and revive us and enable us to live the promised abundant life. In Jesus name we pray. AMEN.

Hymn

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, you always make time for us; we are sorry that we don't always make time for you. When we are rushing around being busy, sometimes even when we are doing your work, we forget to spend time with you. We are sorry when we make our lives so full that there is no room left for you – no room to get away, to be in a quiet place with you.

Forgive us Lord and help us not to speak and act in haste, but to pause to make space for you to dwell within us. And in that dwelling place, may we seek what you want us to do and who you want us to spend time with and what you would like us to do. Help us to get the right balance a right rhythm that is in tune with you. AMEN.

The Lord's Prayer

Notices

Hymn

Bible Reading Psalm 23

Theme Introduction

Malcolm Guite's David's Crown, (Canterbury Press) poem on Psalm 23.

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

When so much shepherding has gone so wrong,
So many pastors hopelessly astray,
The weak so often preyed on by the strong,
So many bruised and broken on the way,
The very name of shepherd seems besmeared,
The fold and flock themselves are torn in half,
The lambs we left to face all we have feared
Are caught between the wasters and the wolf.

Good Shepherd now your flock has need of you,
One finds the fold and ninety-nine are lost

Out in the darkness and the icy dew,
And no one knows how long this night will last.
Restore us; call us back to you by name,
And by your life laid down, redeem our shame.

This poem may trigger your own thought on such aspects of the psalm as the responsibility of shepherding, leading and caring for others (behind the sunny days and romantic hills), the contrast between green pastures and dark valleys, the presence of God as the one certainty and our final hope.

Hymn

Bible Reading Mark 6.30-34,45,46,53-56

Sermon

This week, the readings give us parts of text that are often overlooked because they are connecting verses between stories. The Sea of Galilee is fresh water, like a large Scottish loch. If someone had access to a boat, it would be easy therefore to row or sail across to the other side. Because of the hilly ground around it anyone watching from the shore would also have a good view of your progress and could make a guess as to where you were going to land and so could make the journey round on land to greet you. This is what happened when Jesus took his disciples away to a quiet place to rest. The crowds got there before them. But Jesus has compassion for these people who are desperate to receive his teaching and guidance. However, he does take time to be alone when the crowds are gone – even sending his disciples away. They next time that the boat lands and Jesus walks on the shore, the same thing happens – many people rush to be near him and to asks him for healing.

There are times when we need to put in extra energy and effort: to finish a project, meet a deadline, help a neighbour, visit a family member in distress, assist someone in need, get the gardening done before it rains, clean the house before guests arrive, squeeze in a doctor's appointment, do shopping and errands on the way home. Jesus was recognised and followed by crowds wherever he went with little time to rest or even eat on occasions. So, he tried to retreat with his disciples and have some 'me time' even though his plans were somewhat thwarted. He did expend extra energy to show compassion for others.

Imaginative Meditation of one of Jesus' disciples

'Fortunately, Jesus realised how tired we all were, so he suggested that we get away from it all and have some time to get our breath back. We thought we had managed to slip away by boat, across the lake. But somehow people had spotted us and ran round to the other side. They beat us to it. By the time we got to shore, there was already a crowd waiting. My heart sank. We needed some peace and quiet. But Jesus quoted that verse from Numbers to us, 'They are just like sheep running about without a shepherd,' and he just got on with teaching them – right up until it was too dark to see any more.

The same thing happened when we got into the boat and went to Gennesaret. There was the crowd, waiting on the shore. Everywhere we went – towns, village, out to the countryside – it was always the same. People begging him to heal their friends, their family – whoever they had brought. Some just asked if they could touch his cloak. And eve they got better. It was a most exhausting . . . but I wouldn't have missed it for the world.'

But there are other times when we should rest, rejuvenated our bodies minds and souls. Many people regard busyness as a virtue however we need to maintain a balance between rushing and resting, between following Jesus' example of having compassion for other and looking after ourselves. For we are more able to help others when we are rested and fit and to encourage others in the faith when we are at peace with God.

What is a typical day like for you? Picture a circle like a clock. What do you spend your time doing?

Monday: Waken 7 am lie thinking about day and praying. Get up 7.30 am, have a shower, dress, 8 am take the dog for a walk and pick up newspaper, have breakfast 8.30 am listen to the news on the radio, 9 am get on the computer, read and reply to emails, 10 go to church to lead prayers 11 am coffee and read newspaper; back at manse look at Bible readings for week, start writing service; 1 pm lunch, watch news; 1.45 walk dog 2 pm back on computer, make phone calls, visits, further reading and writing of service 4 pm pick up some groceries at local shop 5 pm make tea, eat 6 pm – watch news 7.30 pm committee mtg or contact on zoom, 8.30 watch TV 10 pm to bed and do crossword and bed.

Prayer of Response

Thank you, Lord, that you always had time for people. Even when you were tired and needed a rest, when the crowds gathered your compassionate heart healed and restored all those who came to you. Thank you that you are kind and caring and lavish your love upon us. Your self-giving love has set us free to be the people you have called us to be. Thank you that you are present in the big and small things of our lives, in the ordinary and everyday times, and also in the extraordinary and special times. Your never leave us or forsake us. Thank you, Lord, our shepherd and king. AMEN.

Roots all age worship

Prayers of Intercession

Let us ask God for rest for the weary ...

We pray for those who are sick and weighed down in body or spirit,
for those who are overworked,
for those who need a break,
for those who near the end of life.
May they know Your peace.

Let us ask God to guide those who are lost or perplexed ...

We pray for all who need shepherding,
and for those who teach and guide others,
in their work, in their home, in their voluntary service.
May they give and receive Your peace.

Let us ask God to provide for the hungry ...

We pray for all who hunger and thirst,
for relief organisations,
for the governments of the world,
for those who rule in our Island state.
May they find peace, create peace, work for peace.

Let us ask God to open places for good news ...

We pray for people who do not know how much You love them,
and for all who share the gospel.

May Your Spirit break down barriers, open hearts,
bring peace.

Let us ask God to hear the prayers of our own minds and hearts ...
These and all our prayers we ask in the name of Jesus our Shepherd and king.

Hymn

Blessing

Do not fear or be dismayed – you are eternally safe in the arms of Jesus ...
Now may the Lord God shepherd you with His Word and Spirit,
and gather you at the last into His fold.
And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you and those dear to you,
this day and every day. Amen.