

It's Just a Master of Time

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Mark 6:30-32

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One afternoon, while in the back yard, a lady noticed an old, tired-looking dog wandering in the yard. It was obvious he had a home, but the dog followed her into the house and fell asleep in a corner. About an hour later he went to the door, and wanted out. The next day he was back and did the same thing. This continued for several weeks. Curious, the lady pinned a note to his collar: "Every afternoon your dog comes to my house for a nap." The next day he arrived with a different note pinned to his collar: "He lives in a home with ten children - he's trying to catch up on his sleep." Apparently even a dog needs to get away from time to time.

Can you imagine what it would have been like to set under the teaching of Jesus? He was always teaching the twelve Apostles. He spent a great deal of time in the early part of His ministry showing them signs and wonders that testify He is the Son of God. Once they start believing that this guy Jesus really is the Messiah, He then begins to show them what it means to be a follower of Christ. He shows them that it involves trusting Him through thick and thin, and according to His timing. He teaches them that His followers serve in His name, and that they are to treat His message as a stewardship entrusted into their care.

Stewardship from a biblical perspective understands that what belongs to God has been entrusted into our care. Jesus talks about the good steward as the one who takes what they are given and helps it grow (see Matthew 25:20). A good steward of the Gospel does not bury it in the ground or keep it secret and keep it safe. By surrendering our lives to Him and by understanding that we are His stewards' means that we freely give Him the use of our hands, the use of our lips, and the use of our time. Being a follower of Christ is a big responsibility. It involves far more than calling Him Lord and being baptized. It means that we accept the fact that we are now serving and working for the Master, and He expects His servants to be doing His work while He is away (see Matthew 25:14)

For most of us we believe that this means when the church needs someone to volunteer, we would step up to the plate and work for Jesus tirelessly. But I want

you to notice what happens when the Apostles return to Jesus after doing what He sent them to do. ³⁰The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught. ³¹ Then Jesus said, “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.” He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn’t even have time to eat. ³² So they left by boat for a quiet place, where they could be alone. ¹ (Mark 6:30-32).

Jesus points out here that sometimes stewardship involves NOT doing. Periodically it is important to cease striving and know that He is God. Or, as Solomon has pointed out in Ecclesiastes 3, there is a time for work, but there is also a time for rest.

As His workers, Jesus becomes the Master of our time. And what does the Master have to say about the time we spend working for Him? If you begin to add up the days of rest found in the Old Testament for the observance of Festivals (such as Passover, Pentecost, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, etc.) and all the Sabbath’s, God has declared that there should be more than 70 days a year when His people are to “do no customary work”. God feels very strongly about taking some time to not only honor Him but to remind ourselves what He has done for us in the past. I’ll admit that understanding this stewardship entrusted to us by Christ is to first realize that we are to go and do. But to Jesus it is just as important for us to realize that it is necessary for us to periodically take a time of rest in order to renew our strength.

Bible commentator William Barclay has said that “Just as a person needs physical rest to renew their strength to work, a servant needs time alone with God in order to renew their Spiritual strength”. How true. And it could be that we end up being burnt out in our service to Christ and His church because we never take an opportunity for God to speak to us. And I believe it’s because we don’t know how to be still and listen. We don’t give God time to recharge us with spiritual strength and energy because we don’t make time to rest in His presence. How can we do God’s work unless it is in God’s strength? And how can we receive that strength unless we seek the presence of God in quietness?

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

These words of Jesus speak volumes to me, for I am guilty of going and doing without ever taking time to just set and listen. And I imagine some of you are just as guilty; working and serving, giving and teaching. Do you see the significance in these events? Jesus spent so much time trying to get these twelve men ready to serve, leading them to the point that they saw their responsibility. But when they return, excited and invigorated about what they had done in the name of Jesus, He says “Let’s go off to a quiet place, just you and me together”.

I imagine by now that the Nominating Committee and the Sunday School Superintendent are squirming in their seats. It’s hard enough getting anyone to volunteer to serve now, and here I am telling people to be still in the presence of the Lord. But don’t miss this point; the time of rest came AFTER the twelve had served. Most of us get that backwards. We want the rest so we will have the strength to serve . . . maybe . . . some day . . . if we feel like it. And I suspect that part of the problem comes from servant burn-out; people who do and do but never do not. Christ, in this example, is not just teaching His Apostles but all who would serve, that it is necessary to take time out for strengthening and refreshing in the presence of our Lord.

I believe that even our Sunday mornings can become more about doing than listening. And unless we are careful I believe even the holiest of times can become so full and fast-paced that we miss hearing from God.

As they traveled the four miles across the sea, what do you think they talked about? What did Jesus have to say? I imagine He was interested in hearing about what they saw and what they experienced. Perhaps He wondered about how the whole event made them feel. The point is that the Lord would have been interested in hearing from them; rejoicing in the work His Apostles had done in His name. I believe Christ wants to do the same with you. I believe we spend way too much time talking about God to one another in church but seldom talk to God together. And I believe that today Jesus is calling us to spend some time with Him alone; for we need refreshing and renewal; we need to hear from our Savior.