

To God Alone Be The Glory

One of the greatest toys ever produced, in the opinion of at least one person present, was the model airplane made out of balsam wood with a propeller on the front powered by none other than a good old rubber band. I remember successfully winding up such a toy, setting it down on the road, releasing the propeller, and watching as the little air plane accelerated, lifted off, flew a big wide circle, and glided to a beautiful landing. So what do you do after a successful run? Why, you pick up the air plane and wind up the rubber band again for another run. And then another run. And then another run. Only, as you wind and wind and wind up the rubber band, all of a sudden, and without any warning, it SNAPS.

The same thing happens to people. If you wind and wind and wind them up—or if they do this to themselves—eventually, and without any warning they snap. It isn't usually a mental breakdown, although that can happen. Sometimes you snap at your loved ones. A self-help author wrote (in Stress Fractures, Charles Swindoll, adapted): "I vividly remember a time when I was caught in the undertow of too many commitments in too few days. I was snapping at my wife and our children, choking down my food at mealtimes, and feeling irritated at those unexpected interruptions throughout

the day. Before long, everything at home was hurry-up. It was becoming unbearable. After supper one evening our younger daughter, wanted to tell me what had happened to her at school that day. She hurried, 'Daddy-I-wanna-tell-you-somethin'-and-I'll-tell-you-really-fast.' Suddenly realizing her frustration, I answered, 'Honey, you can tell me ... and you don't have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly.' She answered: 'Then listen slowly.'"

You might not have a nervous breakdown or even snap at your loved ones, but people who cannot find time for recreation are obliged sooner or later to find time for illness (cf John Wanamaker (1838-1922)). Jesus knows we must come apart and rest awhile, or else we may just plain come apart (cf Vance Havner). That's why he told his disciples in today's Gospel: COME WITH ME AND GET SOME REST.

The disciples really needed some rest. They had just returned from their first missionary journey. We don't know how long they were out there in the villages of Galilee, but Jesus had sent them out two by two after giving them a theme for their sermon: "*Repent because the kingdom of God is near.*" He even gave them the authority to perform miracles on the sick and the demon-possessed. Their sermons were his sermons. Their words were

accompanied by the same miraculous signs and wonders that marked Jesus' ministry. These men were his men.

And just now they have returned to their master. They have all kinds of exciting stories to tell, some of what we like to call "successes," and some failures too. That's right, friends, some people refused to listen even to the apostles. So let's not be surprised when some people won't listen to us. And let's not give up on sharing our faith. After all, many DID listen to the apostles.

But now they are back with Jesus in Capernaum. They turn in their monthly report to the District Mission Board Chairman, Jesus. And, frankly, they are plumb tuckered out. But Jesus is so popular at this time that everyone wants to see him. People are so excited that they haven't even given a thought to the need of Jesus or his disciples to eat a meal in peace and quiet. Jesus knows his disciples' rubber bands have been wound up tight for too long. So Jesus says ³¹to them, "*Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.*"

Rest. We like the sound of that word, don't we? Rest. In Old Testament times God didn't give his people a choice in the matter: when the calendar said Saturday, they were to rest. Even moms got a day off. They were not allowed to cook or clean or do laundry

on Saturday. Rest. Sounds really good to us busy Americans, doesn't it? Rest. Come on, now, Jesus didn't say fall asleep during worship. His example, however, teaches us to keep our lives in balance by taking appropriate time to rest.

Is our busyness hurting our witness about Christ? Perhaps not, but it did in one case. When a busy Christian couple talked to their near neighbors about Jesus, the neighbors responded, "We couldn't be Christians; we couldn't live at your pace." (Jean Fleming, "How Busy Is Too Busy?" in Decision (March 1988))

Jesus told his disciples, "*Come with me and get some rest.*" God's plan for our life on earth summons us to work hard before we let the good times roll. After work has wearied us, then comes the time for rest and ease. Rest is good. But rest is not our permanent state. Not yet. Rest merely precedes and prepares us for more work. In the disciples' case, Jesus is readying them to ponder how to feed the 5000 with nothing but a boy's lunch, which we'll be hearing about in next Sunday's Gospel. The point is: earthly rest is temporary. But you knew that. You've been on vacation only to return to mountains of work and wonder why you even bothered to leave. Yet you needed to rest, at least for a while. Even Jesus, the Son of God, acknowledged the need for physical and emotional rest when he

said to his disciples, ³¹“*Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.*” ³²*So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.*

You probably noticed that Jesus didn't say, “Come on, boys, I'm taking you to Hawaii. The beach awaits.” No. Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but he who had no place to lay his head (Luke 9:58)... he who had no pulpit but a boat on the water's edge, also had nothing but a wilderness of solitude for his resort hotel. Physical rest was important to Jesus.

³³*But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.* It was as if a snow ball had started rolling downhill in Capernaum and picked up people along the way around the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

I wonder if the people even needed to run. It's not like Jesus and the disciples were trying to set a rowing record. The trip across the lake probably took a leisurely pace. In the boat they were finally alone together. Now they could talk about the lessons they learned from their recent missionary journey. In all likelihood, most of their rest that day came on the rowing cruise rather than at the destination. The people weren't going

to leave them alone. They had seen miracles. They had no doubt heard that Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. Enthusiasm had crowded out any consideration for what Jesus and his disciples needed. It was impolite of the crowd to have imposed on Jesus in Capernaum. It was rude of them to follow where only others had been invited.

But did Jesus treat them rudely?

³⁴*When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.* There have been occasions where some of you have encouraged me to take more time off, or mildly chided me in a loving way for working too hard. I thank you for showing such love. You are demonstrating the courtesy and consideration that the crowds did not show Jesus. What you might not see while you're at work or at home during the week is that rest time can be made up later.

Now let's see what Jesus does. On the one hand he has shown us that rest is important. On the other hand, when there is work to be done with the gospel, he suspends his rest for a little while. True servants of Jesus, both called workers and laymen, will quite naturally do the same. Reschedule

your rest, but don't cut it out. And while rest is important, gathering to hear the gospel and then sharing it with others is even more important.

That's what Jesus did because he knew what the Holy Spirit wants us to know. *"There remains a rest for the people of God"* (Hebrews 4), a kind of rest that is all encompassing. When we get to heaven, there will not be even the lightest burden or the slightest shred of distress. I'm not saying there won't be any work. Work was created before the fall into sin. Work is actually good. The sin that is a part of this life since shortly after the beginning—that's what makes work frustrating (Genesis 3:17-19). But when we get to heaven, sin and its consequences will be gone. That burden will be gone, replaced by rest. Permanent will be that rest. Until we pass through heaven's gates, we get to enjoy a sweet foretaste of that rest every time we hear the good news that Jesus died for our sins on the cross. What could be more burdensome than the guilt and shame we carry around for the hurtful things we have done to others and to God's reputation? But the Holy Spirit convinces believers through the gospel to lay down their burdens at Jesus' cross and to walk away with rest, pure spiritual peace in Jesus, the foretaste of our heavenly life.

And I'm so glad he did, because it drives home an important point we need to hear during the summer while many are taking vacations. Although earthly rest is vital and you will get sick if you don't rest, earthly rest is imperfect. You know this if your sleep has ever been disturbed or if your vacation caused you stress. And even if you get well rested while away, you still have to travel home, which can re-exhaust you. Earthly rest is fragile and vulnerable. Even Jesus allowed the crowds to interrupt his rest with his disciples in order to teach his disciples that there is a better rest, the rest which he lovingly gave to the crowd. Isn't it wonderful to hear that Jesus had compassion on them? The first part of God's answer to every human weakness and trouble is his love to us in Christ Jesus our Lord who died in our place so we unworthy sinners could be declared acceptable to God. Let earthly vacations fall short of perfection. When there are too many bugs or too many people or too long a wait for our travel connections, let us at such times rejoice that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, who has given us the rest of not porting our sins around, who has given us the promise of the perfect rest to come.

If Christ has given you rest, you may stand.