

Grace and peace are yours dear friends from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

The gospel message presents a very ‘summer’ concept of rest, relaxation, and getting away. Summer is about vacation because it is a convenient time when school is out, families are together and resorts are staffed to handle the needs of the many. And the needs of the many is what we encounter when we book a trip at Disney, a cruise, or any other vacation hot-spot during the busiest time of the year.

Jesus and His disciples have accomplished much through their words and actions; people have been healed, taught and cared for. After doing much, Jesus calls the disciples to get away and rest for a while; to take time for leisure. However, by now, social media of the day is going crazy! Talk of renewed hope, healing, and restoration is spreading through the land to where people are traveling great distances to simply get close to Jesus.

Now in the context of today and in a similar situation, we would expect (and even offer) words like; we are closed, call back tomorrow, your approximate wait in line is 7 hours...and so on. A time of rest and leisure has come to those who so worked very hard and yet the role of a Shepherd is that of a lifestyle and not merely a job or career. The needs of the ‘many’ present itself to tired disciples: ***and Jesus has compassion.***

Jesus has compassion because He sees the needs of the many not being met; He sees a great flock without a shepherd, an organization without a leader, a country without a king. In other words, He sees a vulnerable people that desperately seek the protection, comfort, and safety of a Shepherd: ***and Jesus provides.***

There is no economy to the compassion of Jesus; there is also no waiting or delay. Jesus told us to, “knock, ask, and seek” and when we seek the Lord Himself, we will never be turned away or told to wait. Jesus is faithful to His calling and to His flock, and even though it is late in the day, there is still time to heal, teach, and comfort the very people God cares so dearly for: ***and Jesus remains.***

There is time my friends, for the needs of the many, the needs of others, the needs of the one. When the needs of others in our community and in our care seek the Lord, then God will be faithful to His people and provide for our strength, endurance, and opportunities to grant healing, teaching, and comfort through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And yet, we have a conflict. As human beings, we have a fundamental problem in that we desire, expect, and even demand a rest. We plan for vacations and time away from what we do without fully understanding the moment we engage with our plans, the clock begins ticking to when we return to the job function we are best equipped to do (in this life). We are always being called to live on the divine side of life, but the human side of life often challenges the authority of the divine within us.

We do live in the divine; we live in the Kingdom of God while existing in the world around us that is full of sin, faults, and divisions. The more we engage with the divine side the more we understand ‘the conflicting side’ will remain for a short while longer and ‘the divine side’ will remain forever.

So back to the vacation and time away. My dear friends, in Christ, God calls us all to live in community with one another and to experience and share ‘life-together’. It is essential to change

perspective, walk away, and take a break for the sake of our renewal and restoration. When we give of ourselves continuously, it is through our leisure experiences with others that we find the miracles of renewal. The Spirit gives us new life to reengage in community with restored hope, faith and strength.

The reality of our vacation is the understanding that God continues to sustain us for the work that is placed before us. At the end of the day, when the needs of others arise, God will provide for their needs through you, me, and all the workers in the Kingdom that answer the call.

This is not difficult or even undesirable to us as long as we remain focused on the divine side of life because the tasks that God calls us to do are the very skills and talents we have been gifted and blessed with. So the very items we are called to support are the same items we enjoy doing most. However, when we allow the human element to take over and influence our actions, we become tired, burdened, and exhausted.

Going back to the gospel text, it was the desire of Christ to meet the needs of the people that was the motivation, strength, and peace that sustained the disciples in the work that was before them.

So why would we think anything was different today? My friends, there are still flocks of lost sheep in the world and ‘yes’, they are still looking for a shepherd, a leader, and a king. Christ is still motivating workers to heal, teach, and comfort the needs of the many and bring them into the understanding of the true kingdom we are all living in; here and now.

The authority of this world has been defeated, overturned, and we have been set free to be the people of God we are created to be. We can meet the needs of the many through Jesus Christ and glorify God without being concerned with sin getting in the way, without the concern of failure, without the worry of falling short of our goal because the Spirit provides and sustain.

We aspire for the ‘best ever’ vacation, this is human nature; for some it will be an experience in nature with mountains, glaciers, wildlife, and foliage; for others it will be the experience of a new culture in a land far far away; and still for others it will be the modern marvels of theme parks, cruise ships, and epic cities. But my friends, none of these experiences can compare to the time we spend and share in person with our Lord, our Savior, our Creator.

The hope of just touching the robe of Christ was the understanding that your life would indeed change; you would indeed be healed, taught, and comforted. Today, that robe is the very garment that swaddles humanity in the love of God that has safely carried us across the Jordon, brought us through the Valley of Death, and delivered us into everlasting life.

The work of the Kingdom is not finished and the time to rest has not yet come. Our Lord remains among us and the Spirit directs our actions to bring all human life to the time of leisure when we forever share the peace that passes all understanding to keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.