

Sunday 21st July 2024

Sermon

My I speak in the Name of God Father, Son and Holy Spirit amen.

I want to start by asking you to think of a time when the idea of doing anything quite literally plagued you. Invoked such stress you have been brought to a complete stop. We associate this feeling most commonly with exhaustion or if we are being as accurate as we can be mental fatigue. It is usually caused by long-term cognitive activities, difficulty in concentrating, decreased alertness, disordered thinking, slow reaction, lethargy, reduced work efficiency, and so on.

Such emotions often lead us to either make bad decisions or not make any decisions at all. I am sure many of us as we now reach the end of this summer term are wrestling with such feelings, perhaps you have been wrestling with them for quite some time. But what do we do when we are presented with a situation where we must act in such a state? What do we do when we need rest and yet forgo it for others?

Tension presents itself loudly in these situations, we are encouraged to act in compassion in by following Christ's example, we are called to be merciful when our energy is all but dissipated. Yet we are not Christ, and we struggle to know how to fully act like him, or fully be like him, or fully reflect his image on and in us. Yet in that image of Christ, we ought to be careful not to focus on just his divinity, Christ shares our humanity, he shared our suffering, our tiredness and pain. Perhaps in his humanity we might more clearly see the answers to the problems in our lives. He saw the crowds, sheep without a shepherd, equally tired and desperate just as his disciples were. Yet he forgoes that time and acts in compassion.

He did because he was surrounded by the people who gave him strength. He acts in sheer desire that these people may be ministered to. His disciples were not like students today, they did not have 'days off' or summer holidays. The disciples lived, slept and ate with Jesus, they were as much his family as his mother and brothers. They were tabernacled, they dwelt with God and God dwelt with them, they shared a common life achieved only by surrender. We all surrender something in our decision to live as Christians, the disciples' surrender was materially greater, but we share the same expectation of surrender in our lives for others.

We do that not in our power, but as a network of Christian people connecting, moving, preaching, healing, praying with one another. It does not mean we

neglect our need for rest- Jesus is not calling us to do that, but it calls us to ensure mercy and compassion are at the forefront of why we act, so that the mission of the church may encounter all people in their desperation and that we know why we undertake this mission when we share that exhaustion.

I remember when I used to share a room with my little brother. When he was one-two, I would wake up to him stirring at about 6:00am, usually tired, to him stood up in his cot staring at me it was a stare with great purpose. That purpose was “get me out of here let’s play”. So, tired though I always was, I would pick him up going into the living room set up his ball pit, gather his favourite toys and play with him while my mum and dad peacefully slept. I did not go on to perform any miracles with him, but it was an act of compassion and one I appreciate more now than I did 8 years ago.

These acts of compassion often come at a cost, but we do them because we can, we can bare these burdens in Christs strength and in the community of one another. It is difficult to see the privilege that it is to serve people in this way when we are exhausted, but compassion strikes differently in our lives. It supports us as much as it supports others.

I want to take us back to the cross when we look at that sacrifice in this context, we are capable of a new encounter. We often look at the journey Jesus took up to Golgotha as the principle for endurance, and while we gain something from this perspective much is lost. Jesus surrenders all in his humanity in the ultimate act of compassion and mercy, which is the giver of abundant life. He demonstrates it across his miracles, the feedings and healings.

It is our privilege to serve with compassion, as Christ saw it was his two millennia ago. The privilege we have is eased by those around us, this is something that Jesus did not have in his final act. The network of not only believers, but this community and communities like this up and down our country enable compassion to be administered in times of exhaustion locally and nationally.

Jesus is the witness of strength, He puts His money where His mouth is. He shows us what exhausted service looks like and that is abundant giving . He demonstrates and we as disciples follow and imitate. He surrenders...
As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd;

Let us pray... Lord may we be transformed by the response to Gods mercy which is surrender of our body. Christ’s life was rest and mission as he gives us

strength to act, he gives us strength rest. May we rest eternally in his love and compassion Amen.

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