

*A Day in the Life of Jesus*  
*Mark 6:30-34, 53-56*

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The lectionary reading for the Gospel today is a curious choice. It combines two shorter sections of the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of Mark – sections that convey the movement of Jesus and his disciples from one place to the next and skips the story of Jesus feeding the 5000. For some reason that story wasn't assigned for today – just the verses that surround it. Instead, we are given a glimpse of the schedule Jesus might have kept as he shared his ministry. Our passage is a window, so to speak, of what might have happened during a day in the life of Jesus.

Our scripture begins with Jesus speaking with his disciples. It tells us the apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all the things they had been doing. Jesus suggested that they go away for a little while and rest because some of them had been so busy that they didn't have time to eat. So, they got into a boat and went off to a deserted place. We learn that many people recognized him and they hurried on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of Jesus and his disciples. When Jesus went ashore, he saw the great crowd and had compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He began to teach them many things.

Our text ends with the closing paragraph of Chapter 6. The disciples and Jesus went to a land at Gennesaret and moored their boat. When they got out of the boat, people recognized him and rushed into the whole region to bring the sick to him. Everywhere he went, people brought the sick to him and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak because all who touched it were healed.

The first place we encounter Jesus in our text is when he is seeking a quiet place for rest. We hear throughout the Gospels that Jesus takes time away from his busy schedule to pause and be still. In our text, he is encouraging his disciples to join him. It is likely Jesus takes time for quiet in order to reaffirm his deep connection with the power of God and find renewed strength for his ministry.

One of my favorite spiritual teachers, Brother David Stendal Rast, has a simple spiritual practice that he calls "Stop. Look. Go." He teaches that each day we need to stop, or pause, so we can look and be grateful for that moment in our life. Then we need to move on and respond to life with a heart of gratitude. It's a simple and delightful way to live your day. Stop. Look. Go.

A few mornings ago, I was washing dishes. I have a window over my kitchen sink and this summer I placed a pot with a few different annuals just outside my window. One of the plants is a tall wispy blue flower with smaller blossoms the shape

of a cone. As I was washing the dishes, my eye caught sight of a hummingbird drinking the nectar from the blue flower. It was so magical that I stopped to watch. I love hummingbirds for lots of reasons but when I learned that it moves its wings in the shape of an infinity symbol, it became a favorite bird. Whenever I see one, I am reminded of the great cosmic story of the gift of God's eternal gift of eternity. The other day this tiny little bird was a particular gift. I have been extremely discouraged by the events of world news lately and beauty and wonder of this little bird helped me to stop, look and remember to open my heart to the great story of God's presence. I was able to move into the day with a grateful heart rather than a grumpy spirit.

Stop. Look. Go. Jesus reminds us to take time for quiet and peaceful contemplation.

Our text takes us onward and we encounter Jesus getting out of a boat and seeing a huge crowd. We are told he has compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began to teach them many things. As we know from the Gospels, Jesus taught about the wisdom and truth of God and the people listened.

As people of faith, it is important for us to continue to listen to the teachings of Jesus. One way to do this is to study scripture. Another way is to practice something the mystics knew as Sacred Reading. It is a simple process. Find a book about God written by an inspiring spiritual teacher. Read it slowly. After reading your allotted section for the day, stop and reflect on what you have read in quiet contemplation. Offer a simple prayer in response to the reading. Something like: "O Gracious One, open my heart to the story of your truth."

Last Monday, the Awakening the Spirit book group met for a summer gathering to discuss John Philip Newell's book: *The Book of Creation*. It's the perfect book for Sacred Reading. Each chapter reflects on one of the seven days of creation and offers insight into the essence of God. The chapters are about 15 pages long with an invitation for prayer at the end of each chapter encouraging the reader to stop and reflect.

This type of practice allows us to continue to listen to the teachings of Jesus even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Finally, our text takes us to Jesus, the healer. As theologian Marcus Borg wrote, Jesus is clearly a healer. Our scripture tells us that those who brought the sick to him wanted to just touch the fringe of his garment because those who did were healed. It's a beautiful image. The energy and power that Jesus embodied was so profound that just touching the fringe of his garment would cure the sick.

While modern medicine is our way of healing the body, being attentive to healing prayer is profoundly powerful regardless of what era we live in. Like taking time to pause and be quiet, praying for healing - the healing of an individual, society, our planet - is transformative. It connects us with the eternal presence and power of God.

There is a prayer for healing we use when we hold our Healing Services. It comes from the Healing Service held once a week in Iona Abbey. Each week people gather on Tuesday nights in the Abbey for the Service of Healing. Those who want to receive prayer kneel in a circle and people place hands of them offering the Prayer of Healing.

Spirit of the living God  
present with us now,  
enter you body, mind and spirit  
and heal you of all that harms you.  
In Jesus name. Amen.

Over the years, I have come to understand that this prayer is a container for Sacred Presence. It's simplicity and direct request recognizes God's powerful presence with us and the asks for a simple healing for those we're concerned about. "Spirit of the living God present with us now, enter you body, mind and spirit and heal you of all that harms you. In Jesus name. Amen." We can also use it to pray for ourselves by just changing the "you" to "me." "Spirit of the Living God present with me now, enter me body, mind and spirit and heal me of all that harms me. In Jesus name. Amen." If prayed over and over again we begin to walk around with a sense of God's presence holding us through the day.

We can also change the words when we don't need a healing prayer. Invoking the same powerful presence of God, we can pray for guidance for our day: "Spirit of the Living God present with me now, enter me body, mind and spirit and guide me in the way of living. In Jesus name. Amen.

This is our invitation from scripture this morning - to follow the flow of Jesus' day and use it as an example for our own lives: Take time for quiet. Take time to listen for sacred teaching. Take time to pray for the powerful healing presence of the Living God. Then, we'll know we are always encircled in the eternal love of God.

Spirit of the Living God  
present with you now,  
enter you body, mind and spirit  
and guide you in your way of living.  
In Jesus name. Amen.

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