

## Come Away for a Rest

I believe that naps are often wasted on toddlers. They will be so afraid of missing out that they'll throw an epic tantrum instead of resting. I think that when we are born, we should be given tokens or a punch card and for every nap we refuse as a child, we can save and use them as we get older. What do you think?

There are times when I'll be at my desk at either Christ Church or Knox United and will suddenly feel as though I want to lie down. There was a time when I would fight the fatigue, I would tell myself, "another hour or two, another task to complete, and then I'll go home and rest". Except I wouldn't.

As an undergraduate I worked two part-time jobs while attending University full-time. I slept, on average, four hours a night, and usually not all together. I had a rigid, precise schedule for every day of the week. I didn't have days off. There was also something I needed to do and I felt I was flourishing in that environment. What I was doing was overstimulating my nervous system which had a kind of burnout. Trust me when I say, you do not want that to happen.

Slowly, but surely, I've learned to listen to the rhythms of my body. It tells me when I'm sluggish. I may be hungry, or thirsty, or in need of physical activity, such as a walk. OR it may be that I am simply tired and my body is in need of rest. We horribly undervalue the necessity of rest.

In today's gospel we hear an example of just this. The disciples have been working very hard and had no leisure even to eat. Jesus can see that they are weary and so he encourages them to "come away to a deserted place by yourselves and rest awhile". He understands that everyone needs rest. And I don't mean a 15 minute break for a cup of tea, but a meaningful time of disconnection. Jesus followers lived in a time before the internet and constant connectivity, yet it wasn't difficult to find Jesus.

And even Jesus, the Son of God, needed time away. Time to rest his mind, his soul, and his heart, as well as his body. If you are so busy doing good in the world that you cannot rest yourself, eventually your body will make you rest and then you're of no use to anyone.

Eleanor Brownn, a seasoned health education professional, specialising in self-care, said it best, "Rest and self-care are so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel." ([www.eleanorbrownn.com](http://www.eleanorbrownn.com))

Now, please hear me when I say this. Taking time for rest is not important. IT'S IMPERATIVE. Before COVID it was often common to hear people talking about how much they were working and how tired they were as a badge of honour. It's not.

Nobody is irreplaceable, well, except maybe Jesus. No matter how well respected we are, and no matter what role we play in our society, we can and will be replaced. Take a moment for that to sink in. **No matter how well respected we are, and no matter what role we play in our society, we can and will be replaced.**

Both congregations have had ministers before me, and God willing, you'll have ministers after me. I'm not planning to go anywhere for quite some time. I promise.

During COVID, many businesses had to pivot to work within protocols. Some closed temporarily, and some closed permanently. Not to mention the thousands of people who have died from COVID. If there was an employment shortage before, it's even larger now. Businesses are once again opening, or pivoting back to what they can be when they are fully open.

I have heard many "experts" talk about the COVID rest and how they have learned a better life-balance with the time off they experienced during the pandemic. I have also seen and heard from colleagues across denominations talk about how weary they are through COVID and how the workload has not lessened. And with the conversation about reopening buildings and developing blended or hybrid worship, that workload will only increase.

The reality is, most of us are weary. Some of us are afraid. Of what happens next? What if there's another wave? What if someone we love gets COVID. What if WE get COVID? So many variables. Which is the right combination for the best protection of our most vulnerable? The reality is, we don't have the answers, yet, we do know our communities best. We cannot make everyone happy. THAT is a universal truth. Yet we can and must do what we feel is best for the majority.

Back to our Gospel reading. Jesus led his disciples where they could be away, but a great crowd descended upon them, and even before they could get out of the boat, they were surrounded by a crowd for which Jesus felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

The crowd brought their sick on mats to wherever Jesus was. And Jesus taught his disciples, and the crowd, the lessons of God. We are not told specifically, yet I would suspect that Jesus also talked to his disciples about pacing themselves.

There will always be something, yet to be done, or simply left unfinished, on the To Do list. There will always be a person in need of care or healing or health. They are important. And so are we. If we are not at our best, and have not been caring for ourselves, what help can we be to those who need us?

At the end of the day, my brothers and sisters, it is imperative, each and every one of us, to listen to the rhythms of our bodies. To make time for relaxation and, dare I say it, fun! It is important we be as well-rounded as we are, not from all the baking we've discovered through COVID, but from using every part of ourselves; body, mind, heart and soul. Resting all four and making time to unplug, relax and simply be.

It may be taking a walk by the river, or gazing at these incredible mountains. It may be taking a few days away with no access to internet or technology and listening to the sounds of nature. It may be taking a nap in the shade in a hammock. Or it may be listening to music and dancing like a fool...not caring if anyone is watching or not! We need to learn to listen to our bodies. And then doing what our body needs to know it is loved, nurtured and celebrated.

Jesus taught his disciples well. And while he may not have always been successful in what he was trying to do, he did put himself first, from time to time. Never at the detriment of those he was serving, but in order that he could serve them better.

Remember back in the day when we could fly on airplanes? In the safety instructions we are told to put our own oxygen masks on before we try to help anyone else. Why? Because if we lose consciousness, we cannot help another. If our vessels are empty, we cannot fill the vessel of another.

Jesus made sure his vessel was filled before he tried to fill the vessel of another. For that, and for all of those lessons, we give thanks!

Thanks be to God. Amen!

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Mark 6.30-34, 53-56  
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