

Proper 12B (Pentecost 8), 2009

Text: Mark 6:45-56

Title: Busy!

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You are busy people. You live busy lives.

One lesson I learned early on as your pastor, is that just because people are retired, does not mean that they aren't busy.

Many of the active members in our congregation are retired. But that doesn't mean that you're sitting at home doing nothing. You're babysitting your grandchildren, you're going to the doctor's, you're off to the Senior center, you're volunteering at the library, you're flying across the country to visit your children. You're doing everything except sitting at home.

Some of you are still working full-time, and you may be raising kids or grandkids, too. You're taking them to sports and camps and friends' houses.

The young people in our congregation may be the busiest of all. With school and homework and part-time jobs, and sports and scouts and other activities, you barely have a chance to sit down. But then you still need time to go out with your friends and have some fun.

It seems like everyone's busy these days. Even on Sunday mornings. It used to be that church was the only option on Sunday mornings, but not any more.

With so much going on, and with the option to sleep in and relax, it's a miracle that anyone is here at all this morning. So why are you here? Why have you added one more thing to an already chaotic, busy life?

Well, consider our gospel lesson. Our gospel is one of busyness and chaos. It's a hectic scene. People are moving in all directions, and it's hard to keep track of them all. In every verse people are in motion- in and out of boats, up and down the mountain, across the lake, from town to town, everyone is on the move, everyone's busy.

There are three main groups of people to keep track of. There's the disciples, there's the crowds, and then there's Jesus, and they're all very busy.

The disciples have just finished a long day. They've served dinner to over 5,000 people and cleaned up the leftovers. Imagine if you and 11 of your closest friends have just spent hours serving and cleaning up after several thousand people. The day was already late when you started, and it's practically night by now. You're probably exhausted and ready to collapse. If you see one more piece of bread lying around, you'll go crazy.

But there's no rest for the disciples. No time to relax and enjoy the evening with Jesus. Instead, Jesus send them away.

Immediately, says our text, Jesus “made” his disciples get into a boat and set sail. They probably weren’t too excited, and needed a little encouragement. They are tired. They are sleepy, the last thing they probably want to do is to get into the boat and set sail. But Jesus makes them do it.

They’re not going for a ride, they are working the boat- its sails and its oars and its rudder, to sail across the sea in the dead of night. And Jesus isn’t even riding with them.

While the disciples sail off into the sunset, Jesus releases the crowds, sends them home for the night. You can imagine the commotion as over 5,000 people try to gather their things and go home. Have you ever tried leaving the parking lot after a big game or a concert? It’s a big mess.

And Jesus is in motion, too. He doesn’t turn in. He doesn’t go to sleep. He goes off to a mountain to pray.

While all of this is happening the disciples are struggling with the storm. The wind is against them, and no matter how they adjust the sails, no matter how they strain at the oars, they are going nowhere. It’s almost morning, they’ve been working all night, and now they’re stuck.

Jesus is moving, though. He doesn’t seem to have any issues with the wind. Jesus is just out for a stroll. He’s actually on his way to the other side, but when the disciples see him, they’re scared out of their wits, and so Jesus gets in the boat and calms things down.

When they reach the other side, the busyness and the chaos picks up, just as before. The crowd comes back, bringing the sick folks to see them.

You know how busy you get when someone you love gets sick. There are tests to be done, doctors to be seen. You’re rushing around to hospitals and nursing homes and pharmacies, and it seems like you’re spending half your life in waiting rooms. When someone you love is sick, your life becomes incredibly busy. There’s all the usual stuff to be done, plus a lot more.

So these busy people bring their sick family members and their sick friends to Jesus. They’ve tried other doctors, other cures, they might as well try one more, couldn’t hurt. And Jesus actually brings them life and healing, in the midst of their pain and suffering, in the midst of their busyness.

People are busy. We like to think that we’re busier now than we were in years past, but people will always find things to do. Even if we can afford to, we have a hard time sitting still and relaxing.

In this story we see the busyness of the disciples, the busyness of the crowd, and the busyness of Jesus. Everyone is busy. Everyone is on the move.

Notice, though, the difference it makes when Jesus is around. Jesus’ presence makes all the difference.

When the disciples are alone in the boat, the winds are against them, they aren't going anywhere, and they are scared out of their wits.

When Jesus is in the boat with the disciples, the winds ceased and they were no longer afraid. They were still confused, but they weren't afraid. They continue to make progress and eventually get to the other side.

When Jesus is there they aren't afraid and they are moving forward once more. It's Jesus' words that do the trick. He says, "Do not be afraid," and those words bring them calm and peace.

Jesus makes all the difference.

Jesus makes all the difference to the crowds, too. Without Jesus, the people are sick and dying. They live in fear and hopelessness. They live in pain and suffering.

But when Jesus is with them, He brings life and healing. All it takes is a touch, and their lives are changed forever.

Jesus makes all the difference.

You live very busy lives. That's not going to change. You might think, once the kids are grown, I'll have more time. Or, once I retire, I'll have more time. Or, once I get through the latest round of treatment, I'll have more time. One day, I'll have more time.

Chances are, you'll always have an excuse to be busy.

The question is, is Jesus with you in the midst of your busyness? Is Jesus in the boat with you, or are you fighting against the wind and not going anywhere?

Is Jesus in your town to visit with you and heal you, or are you off to somewhere else? Jesus still comes to be with us today, but often we've got excuses. People make plenty of excuses when it comes to Jesus.

I'll start reading the Bible, once I have more time. I'll spend time in prayer, once I have more time. I'll actually make it down to Bible class one of these Sundays, once I have more time. I'll start coming to church more regularly once I have time.

There's always something to be busy with.

Jesus told a parable about people who were invited to a banquet. One said that he had just bought some land, and he needed to look it over. Another said that he just bought some oxen and he was off to try them out. A third said that he was just married and didn't have any time. Everyone had an excuse.

In most cases, you will not be able to escape the busyness of life. You will probably be busy for the rest of your life. The question is not, "Are you busy?" But, "Is Jesus with you in the midst of your busyness?"

Jesus does not call you to sit at home and do nothing, to quit your job, to ignore the needs of your family and your neighbor.

These are all good things that you are called to do. You are called to work diligently and honestly, to treat those who work under you and those who work over you with respect. You are called to love and care for your spouse and your children and your grandchildren. You are called to love and serve your neighbor.

Being a Christian doesn't mean sitting at home doing nothing all day, giving up everything that you love. It's a good thing for you to go to work, to visit with your family, to babysit your grandkids, to take your mom to the doctor's, to be involved with scouts and sports and music and drama with your kids and grandkids.

Just don't try to do it alone.

If you do, you'll end up like those disciples, straining against the wind and not going anywhere. You will be busy, but without a purpose.

Jesus comes to bring calm in the midst of the busyness. He comes to bring life and hope in the midst of the busyness.