

Going on Vacation
 4th in a series of 5 “The Jesus Enterprise” -- Ephesians 1:3-14
 Saint Marks UMC, Charleston, WV 8th Sunday after Pentecost (July 22) 2012

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory..

In the first week of this sermon series we were introduced to the nature of the Jesus Enterprise – known as “**JESUS INCORPORATED**” (or “the Body of Christ.”)

In the second week, we heard how Jesus commissions the staff to do the work of the Enterprise. But, when things don’t go quite the way we expect, Jesus tells the staff (us) to shake it off.

Last week we looked at how Jesus reveals the power inherent in the staff of the Jesus Enterprise. We also learned that with Jesus, Incorporated, it’s not a numerical bottom line that drives us, but the transformation of people’s lives, and the life of the world, as Jesus’ agents act as light, salt, and leaven in the world.

Next week we will be reminded: **That It IS Jesus’ Enterprise – not ours**

In today’s Gospel Lesson, we heard Jesus tell His staff: that they needed to come away to a deserted place and rest themselves.

It’s not a new message. It’s as old as the first paragraph of the second chapter of the first book of the Bible. Then, to make sure that people got the message, God included it in the big ten written in stone, on the mountain, given to Moses, and found in Exodus.

It is the fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

The one immediately following (5th commandment) is very similar: honor your parents.

To see what makes these two commandments alike is to understand that the fifth one – honor your parents – is not about teenagers disobeying their parents. (That's covered in a lesser commandment that the big ten. It says that if your children backtalk and disobey, you should take them to the edge of town and stone them to death – and they were talking about rocks.)

No, the 5th commandment is about honoring aged parents – parents who are unable to contribute economically, parents who sometimes need to be taken care of.

The link between 4 and 5 is that God is describing that in God's Creation – all of which received an A+ grade for being good – there is value to things that don't make money. There is value to things which don't seem utilitarian. There is great worth in letting things rest and simply be.

Jesus understood this and was teaching His staff here about the NEED FOR BALANCE in Jesus, Incorporated.

Following Jesus' directions from two weeks ago (where you shake the dust off your feet where the Gospel is not accepted) the disciples had had tremendous success. They had been VERY BUSY and had borne much fruit.

But, instead of telling them to STRIKE MORE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT, Jesus said: don't forget to rest. It's not merely a suggestion; it's a command. And the commands are simply operating instructions for how to work in synch with Creation.

The Chinese language is made up of “PICTOGRAPHS” – similar to our letters. In Chinese, the pictograph for “BUSY” is made of TWO FIGURES: **HEART** and **KILLING**.

Remember, the commands are simply operating instructions for how to work in synch with Creation.

In our world today, we so often seem so GOAL ORIENTED. What is the task? What is the Problem to be fixed? Attack!

Our impulse in this kind of world – particularly when we suffer from the condition of unrested weariness – is to rush headlong to do anything, as quickly as possible, to fix it.

In the soil of the quick fix is the seed of a new problem – because we do not stop to rest; we do not allow our quiet wisdom to be made available to us.

When we operate like this, everything seems to operate in SURVIVAL MODE – where every issue takes on terrifying perspective. We cannot allow things to just set for awhile.

When I learned out to make concrete in Mexico – mixing it on the ground in front of the work project – there always came a time immediately after adding the water – where we stopped and allowed the mixture TO REST.

Sabbath is a way of being in time where we:

1. Remember who we are
2. Remember what we are, and
3. Taste the gifts of spirit and eternity

It's more than just a day off from work to do our non-paying tasks. Rather, it needs to be a time of doing nothing, of being quiet, of listening to what is most deeply nourishing, beautiful, or true.

It is in Sabbath rest that we are able to see things that are always present, but not noticed.

Great inventions are often like that. Simply seeing things that are right there but which others don't see. Steve Jobs said that was the heart of all of what he did – just see things that others don't take the time to see.

When we rush, problem solve, hurry, work, work, work, there is no time to see the things that are most deeply nourishing, beautiful, or true.

That's why we paced our worship today differently, with more short rests of music – to allow the Spirit room to intercede with sighs too deep for words.

It is in Sabbath - regular times of quiet rest -- when we learn the language of God, Who whispers to our soul the things that are most deeply nourishing, beautiful, or true; Who whispers the way to connect the dots in our life.

You have a green sheet of paper with dots. Can you connect them to form the picture? It's harder when the numbers are missing, yes?

In life, when we just run from dot to dot, we may get "THERE" but neither know where we are or why. Sabbath connects the dots.

When Jesus tells the staff to take time for Sabbath, He wasn't doing it for God's benefit; it's for ours.

Jane and I will be doing it, right after church today: going on vacation. It's what we do in order to see and hear the things that are most deeply nourishing, beautiful, and true.

See you in two Sundays. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

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