

Let us pray –

Help us Lord, to find our way to those deserted places where we can be alone with you. Help us to find our Sabbath, your last gift to us at creation. Amen.

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Do you have a deserted space? Someplace where you can escape from the hustle and bustle of your life?

Too many of us are attached at the hip to our cell phones, our personal data assistant, our cell phones, our emails, and our voice mails. Some of us have come to believe that all that technology, and all those pieces of equipment, make us *more connected*.

We might be more connected to the internet – but are our *lives* more connected in the ways that really count?

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I learned a great many lessons from my mother. I should probably say, my mother *taught me* a great many lessons. The jury is still out on just how well I might have learned any of those lessons.

Back in the days when Mom couldn't seem to pass up any chance for a bus trip, or a cruise, or a plane ride, my brother, sister and I began to pressure her to get an answering machine. Year after year, at Christmas time, one of us would broach the subject – *why don't we get you an answering machine this year?*

No thanks, Mom would say. I don't want one of those things. If anybody wants to get in touch with me, and I'm not home, they can just call back later. But Mom, we would say. Sometimes *we* want to get in touch with you, and you're on the go so much, you're hard to keep up with. That's okay, she'd say. If I'm not home to answer the phone, then I'm not home to listen to your message either. Just keep calling until I answer the phone.

We had just about given up. It had gotten to the point where it had become a joke. One of us would still ask, every Christmas – what about that answering machine?

Well one year, us kids were heading out to Wal-Mart just before Christmas, had our coats on – were at the door – and we threw out the question with a laugh – *Why don't you come to Wal-Mart with us, and we'll pick you out an answering machine.*

We giggled, and heading on out the door. No, that's okay Mom said – just get whatever kind you want.

Whoa! We stumbled back inside, glanced at each other to make sure we'd heard correctly, and my brother said 'You're kidding. Right?'

“No” Mom said. “You all get whatever type you want.” “Well just wait a minute” I said. “We can get one that comes with a phone attached, or one that is a stand-alone unit that uses your existing phone. It can have a little cassette tape, or be digital. There are sooooo many options.”

“That's okay” Mom said, “you all get whatever you want, it doesn't matter.”

“Well, gee, that's great” we said. So back on, go the coats, and we head toward the door again. I said “this is great Mom. It makes us real happy.”

“I know” she said. “That’s why I want you to just go ahead and get me one.” By this time we are in the door, just about to close it behind us, and we hear . . .

“It doesn’t matter which options you get, because as soon as you all leave after Christmas, I’m going to disconnect it and put it in the closet. But since you really, really want to buy me one – go ahead and get one that’s really expensive.”

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My mother knew where her deserted place was. It was a place that wasn’t controlled by answering machines and voice mail. We, or course, thought that if she didn’t have an answering machine, that she wasn’t connected to us. How wrong we were.

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Jesus called the apostles away to a deserted place. They had just returned from their first missionary trip and were full of news of all that they had done.

Teaching, preaching, miracles. It had been wonderful. And . . . they were so busy, that they didn’t know if they were coming or going. So busy, that they didn’t have time to eat.

I wonder how many of us – how many of your families – could find a place in that story.

So come away, Jesus said. Let’s go away by ourselves. We’ll find a quiet place. And just rest.

It is in returning and rest [that] we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence *shall be our strength*

Those words from scripture provide a frame for the Sabbath time that we should find in our lives. Returning, rest, quietness, confidence, strength.

Jesus knew that the disciples needed some ‘alone time.’ They – and we! – can be about the busyness of our lives for only so long.

Of course, as we hear the rest of today’s lesson from scripture, the crowd say Jesus and the disciples heading out of town on a boat, figured out where they were going, and ran ahead to meet them.

When the boat came back to shore, we hear that Jesus saw the crowd, knew that they were like sheep without a shepherd, and had compassion on them.

The response of Jesus was to begin to teach them. Seeing them lost like sheep, being filled with compassion for them, Jesus began to teach. Not heal, not raise the dead, not feed them by the thousands, not exorcise demons.

Jesus did do all those other things, but the first thing he did – his first compassionate response – was to teach them.

Mark doesn’t tell us what it was, that Jesus taught them. As is often the case, we each have to find the lesson for ourselves. Taking a queue from the desire of Jesus that the disciples go away and rest for awhile, the lesson for me today, is to remember the Sabbath, and to keep it holy.

I do a pretty good job of remembering – I just too often set the whole thing aside. There's always another email to write, or another painter to talk to, or another leak in the roof to worry about. The lesson for me – is to not only remember the Sabbath, but to keep it holy.

God's last gift to us, at creation. After the sun and the moon, the stars in the sky, water, plants and animals, the gift of life itself, and finally – rest.

Like the lessons that my mother tried to teach me, and that I didn't always learn the first time around, Jesus also has lessons to teach me.

Some of them, I have to learn over and over again. If you too have a problem in finding your Sabbath – maybe you also need to re-learn this lesson.

Find your deserted place, find your Sabbath time, and keep it holy.

Let us pray.

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God. Amen.