

Proper 11B July 19-15

Well, here we are in the middle of summer. The hot and humid weather has arrived and the rain storms as well. In the fields and farms, too much rain has made some spots look like ponds and lakes. But even though the crops are late in grown,

The farmers have to let nature take its course and watch and wait. We arrived at the lazy hazy days of summer.

Most people are able to take a vacation this time of year. To get away from the routine, hustle and bustle, and do some serious stress reduction. Even just a few days away from it all can be a better attitude adjustment than a cocktail. The problem comes when we try to make ready to go away. There is so much to do. Stop the mail, arranged to have the lawn mowed and the garden watered. Then there is the packing, deciding what to take or not, taking the dog or cat to the kennel, readying the car or checking the tickets and reservations.

Getting away from it all is not easy.

And when we finally take off, we make the mistake of bringing along our cell phones and laptops and with them all the connection to people and their stuff, we are really should leave behind.

In the gospel story today even Jesus sought a place for Himself and His disciples to rest awhile. He'd been teaching and healing all around the Seas of Galilee and the Apostles had come back from a mission tour of duty themselves doing amazing things for the people who would listen to their message of God's love and salvation. It is always a smart thing to pull oneself back together after a very taxing and busy time. We all need to regenerated, rest so that our energy can come back in readiness for the next task.

But sometimes that doesn't happen like we would wish. We come home from work, and something just has to get done Right NOW. Others don't always respect our down time or even know that we really, really need it. When you've got responsibilities, taking care of oneself isn't as easy as it sounds.

Like Jesus we are moved with merciful love, with compassion and somehow we push ourselves and do one more thing. Jesus, though weary, did not send the crowd away or rebuke them, For much of the day he taught, preached, healed, and tended to their needs.

There seems no end to the many needy. Yet Jesus tells the disciples to come with him to a lonely place on the other side of the lake that they might have peace and rest for a little time.

I think that what we see here is what might be called the rhythm of the Christian Life. We might call it the “ups” and “downs” or the “ins and “outs” of our encounter with God in the midst of daily living. There is an undulating rhythm where we go back and forth from the present moment of daily life and work and into the presence of God and then back again. It is like the rhythm of sleep and work. We cannot work unless we have our time of rest; and sleep will not come unless we have worked until we are tired.

There are two dangers in life. First there is the danger of too constant activity. No one can work with rest; and no one can live the Christian life unless one takes time to be with God. It may well be that the whole Trouble in our lives is that we give God no opportunity to speak to us, because we do not know how to be still and to listen; we give God no time to recharge us with spiritual energy and strength, because there is no time when we wait upon the Lord. How can we shoulder life’s burdens if we have no contact with him? How can we do God’s work unless we are strengthened by God? And how can we receive that strength unless we seek in quietness and in loneliness the presence of God?

Second, there is danger in too much withdrawal. Devotion that does not issue in action is not real devotion. Prayer that does not issue in work is not real pray. Bible reading and Bible study brings comfort but it also has as its purpose a call to action and concern. Some think that they can be close to God yet avoid fellowship of other. We come close to God in our worship, prayer and sacraments so that we can be better equipped for life in community with others.

In other words, the Christian life is the alternating, back and forth meeting with God in order to better integrate ourselves with others in the community.

To engineer and organize day life so that this back and forth can happen is not easy. Even Jesus ran into difficulty with it. In the Gospel story He and His disciples sought some little peace but the people ran after them. An ordinary man would have been intensely annoyed. The rest they so much desired and which they had so well earned was denied them. Their privacy was invaded. But Jesus rather than resent it all, was moved with pity at the

pathos of the crowd. He looked at them; they were so desperately in earnest; they wanted so much what he alone could give them; to him they were like sheep who had no shepherd.

What did he mean?

Sheep without a shepherd cannot find the way. They will consume the grass down to the roots and then starve if not lead to green pastures. Left to ourselves we get lost in life. Many people feel like "lost children out in the rain."

In the midst of daily struggles there is no clear path to proceed. Bewildered and confused, like lost sheep, who have gone astray. Standing at some crossroads and knowing which way to take, fear and darkness can overcome us.

Thanks be to God we have a shepherd, Christ Jesus, who is able and ready to lead us in the right way. He provides directly and indirectly the inspiration and strength which can keep us going. If life has taught us one thing it must be that we cannot live it alone. So many temptations, troubles and evil assail us. It is any wonder that we get tired, or irritable, exhausted and feel defeated?

Remember when we were told that all our modern conveniences would make life so much more leisurely and happier? Instead the rush, the many, many ways we are drawn into the fray have increased.

My dear friends, we need to cast our cares upon the Lord and find that quiet place in the midst of things where we can be still and lifted up to the presence of God. Only by keeping regular company with God can we walk in the world, yet keep our sanity. With the Lord we will be safe.

In the Disney film, *Song of the South*, Uncle Remus tells the stories about Brea Rabbit, Brea Fox and Brea Bear. Brea Rabbit sing a wonderful song about a very special place he goes to where he is happy, safe, filled with joy and laughter. It is the place where he can enjoy a moment of pure bliss. He sings about it and calls it his "Laughing Place".

May each of us discover where that is in our own lives. I am not so sure it is as much a place as an attitude. It is a commitment to be faithful and close to God and others where we may find true rest, peace and safety. Amen.