

We are in many ways a weary people. Literally and figuratively, we are tired. We thrive on telling others when asked how we're doing, "Busy." Or we might hear: "I'm wiped out." "I'm running on empty." "I'm run ragged." "I need more caffeine."

In the National Sleep Foundations' Annual Survey, they estimate that a quarter of the adult population in the USA is sleep deprived. The average we should be getting is 7-9, more or less if you're over 65 and under 18. That's a lot of weary people. And it's a serious problem. Lack of sleep affects our physical and mental health. It can also be deadly. An estimated 60% of licensed drivers reported that they drove "while drowsy" (you know, I'll just "shake it off" and be okay). Sleep deprivation is a serious problem and stems from a variety of causes: lifestyle choices, work, illnesses, sleeping disorders. The 2024 Survey focused on Teens and Sleep. And the results weren't glowing. They're clear: far too many Americans, adults and children, are not getting enough sleep. We are quite literally, a weary, tired people.

We are a tired people. And many will tell you so. We are over-worked, over-committed, over-extended. We are stressed, stretched and burnt-out. It seems like there's a competition where we try to out-do one another with how "busy" and how "tired" we are. Being busy has become the norm, we don't need a survey to tell us this.

And we're not just physically tired. The Germans have a word for this: *weltschmerz*, "world weariness." (coined in 1827 and used by the Grimm Brothers) We are wearied by many things in our lives: the rat race, the daily grind, climbing the corporate ladder, survival of the fittest, hustle culture, it's a hamster wheel world, the routine, which may be changing each and every day. We're tired. All the time.

In our gospel lesson this morning, Jesus addresses the tiredness and busyness of the apostles. As a reminder, we're in the middle of the scene (and near the middle of the Gospel of Mark): Jesus has returned from the region of the Gerasenes, he's been met with crowds on the shore, he's healed a woman, he's raised a girl from the dead, and he's gone home. He's back, out and about in the countryside, teaching and healing, he's sent the disciples out to be co-creators of this new thing God is doing in their midst: The Kingdom of God is come near. Repent and believe the good news.

So, here we are, in the middle of the scene the gospel writer has given us. The next scene is the ending of this one: the feeding of the multitudes and walking on water.

And Mark's gospel tells us that the disciples have done it. They've gone out into the countryside and preached, and taught and healed. They're seeing the Kingdom of God. They've reunited with Jesus and giving their report, and we're told there are so many people coming and going, they're unable to eat. So Jesus invites them to a quiet place and to get some rest. They get in a boat and head to a solitary place....

Doesn't that sound nice? Come. Get some rest. Stop what you're doing. Get away from it all.

Yet, here's where we often stop and say, "But Jesus I have just one more thing I need to do. Not quite yet, Jesus. Maybe later today. Maybe tomorrow." "See how much good work is being done. If I don't do this, who will? See how valuable I am?"

And rest doesn't happen. For us. And today, we hear, for the disciples either. The solitary place they set out for, ends up not being solitary at all. For the crowds see them in the boat and suss out where they're headed; so that when Jesus and the disciples arrive at this solitary place, it's no longer solitary. The crowds they've left behind are now here. And when they leave this place, they go, again, to the other side (to the land of the Gentiles) and are met with crowds of people as well.

Jesus does what Jesus does throughout the gospels. He has compassion on the people. He makes time for them. We're invited into this scene with the disciples, with the crowd, with Jesus. We too are invited to find rest. To find restoration. To not be weary or tired anymore. To be refreshed and renewed. To be made well. Amen