

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Have you heard any good advertising slogans lately? I haven't watched much television for last 15 years so I suspect I'm out of touch, but I remember some from when I was much younger. I'm not even sure I could tell what product or company the slogan represented but I think of some like "good to last drop", "we try harder", "fly the friendly skies of...", or maybe "when it rains it pours", "takes a licking, keeps on ticking". One of those was for a watch brand, another might have been for a brand of salt, and certainly one had to be for an airline.

I like the one, it may still be around, "you deserve a break today". What I thought was particularly ingenious was the use of the word "deserve". Avoid guilt feelings because you deserve a break today.

Now strangely enough there's a "break" in our gospel this morning. The disciples had been sent out to proclaim God's Word, heal, cast out unclean spirits. They've come back and they have told Jesus what they have done and taught, Jesus invites them to "come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." They have been busy, now they are back.

So they go to a lonely spot, probably some four miles away on the other side of the lake. Folks see them going and head on foot to meet them, for some perhaps a ten mile journey. They must have hurried because they arrive before Jesus and his disciples. As many as five thousand people make the idea of a break seem well nigh impossible.

So let's think about, let's talk about this for a bit. There's nothing wrong with a break, with an intermission. Go to a concert or a play, there's often a break or intermission, you've got times between periods in hockey, at half time in football, I suppose even a 7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch in baseball. God ordained a day of rest back in the very beginning, God himself rested after he finished creation. God gave us the third commandment to remind us "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy", Jesus reminds us that the Sabbath was created for man, and he tells us to come to him, all who are weary and heavy laden and he will give us rest. We can work 'til we drop, but drop we will. We need a healthy balance of work, play and rest.

The crowd has had a goodly hike, they want to see Jesus, they need to see Jesus, they don't know just who he is yet, a prophet, Elijah, John the Baptizer, but they know he works miracles, many of them are looking for a miracle in their lives. Perhaps for themselves, a woman with a bleeding disorder, a man who is blind, a leper, others are looking for a loved one, a friend who can't walk, a son or daughter who is ill, near death, possessed by an unclean spirit. Jesus and the disciples are looking for a break, an intermission, instead they find a great crowd and a great interruption. There are times when my whole day seems to be one interruption after another, but those are all opportunities for reaching out, for caring, for sharing, for ministry, they are priorities if you will. I think of Jesus' example and as imperfect as I am, I try to

imitate him. I can't heal or anything like that, but I can let people know they are important to me, to God.

Jesus saw the crowd and had compassion for them, they were like sheep without a shepherd. Think about the word compassion, it's sympathy, pity, even affection. Think about yourself now, if you were like sheep without a shepherd. You might be inclined to look for green pastures and still waters, but would you have any idea where to find such? You might spend the night hungry, to say nothing of cold, and frightened from the dangers around you, separated from your fellows, wishing for a shepherd with a rod and staff to protect and correct you.

Jesus saw the crowd in need of a shepherd, not just a shepherd but a Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, he saw this crowd with needs that only he could and would meet.

The Good Shepherd who saw the crowd and had compassion for them, he provides for their needs, feeding them with five loaves and two fish, healing and teaching. Jesus makes them, he makes us lie down in green pastures, he leads us beside still waters, his rod and staff comfort, correct and protect us. Jesus our Good Shepherd prepares a table for us in the midst of the world which hates us, even in the valley of the shadow of death, the darkest valley, he is with us, he restores our souls.

Our gospel shows us Jesus planning a break, an intermission, but instead dealing with an interruption, who meets the needs of the crowd. Deserve a break today? The best break in the world is the break you get this morning with our Good Shepherd. AMEN