

“BALANCING ACT”

Preaching text: Mark 6:30-34

The news has had lots of stories lately about how people are getting away for vacations. Getting on a plane looks like a nightmare. I can't believe the fist fights that are happening while these planes are flying. The roads are crowded and gas prices are getting higher. As much as people are craving vacations this seems like a perfect time to stay at home where it is nice and quiet.

I do hope you are able to find a quiet spot this summer. Maybe it is somewhere exotic that you have travelled to. Or maybe it is just a place you can go to get away from it all.

Everyone needs a quiet spot ... a place that they can get away to recharge the batteries, to revive the soul. Jesus knew it was important for people to get away from time to time. We see this in our Bible reading for today. His disciples had been out preaching and teaching and healing. So, Jesus suggested that they get away from the crowds for a while and rest. So many people were coming and going that they barely had time to eat. So, Mark tells us, they left by boat for a quieter spot. Notice it was Jesus who made this suggestion. Jesus knows that just like the disciples ... we cannot keep going at full speed all the time. We all need that downtime to reenergize our body, minds and spirits. When we don't do that ... when we ignore our need for rest, we are just asking for trouble. Jesus believed in taking time off. Even God worked six days and rested on the seventh.

Our lives were designed for balance. This is a concept that some people still need to discover ... how to balance one's life ... work and family, income and spiritual well-being, time on and time off.

Notice that God created day and night. The day was for working. The night was for resting. But modern humanity is not content with that. Now our stores are not only staying open 7 days a week, but many are staying open 24 hours a day. But we were not created to go 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Notice that God created us so that we would spend about a third of every day sleeping. We were created for balance ... for working and relaxing, for business and family, for

socializing and spending time alone with God. Any time our life gets out of balance, we pay a price.

Aesop's fable said it well. In ancient Athens, a man noticed the great storyteller Aesop playing games with some children. He laughed and made fun of Aesop, asking him why he wasted his time in such frivolous activity. Aesop responded by picking up a bow, loosening its string, and placing it on the ground. Then he said to the man, *"Now answer the riddle if you can. Tell us what the unstrung bow implies."*

The man looked at it for several moments but had no idea what point Aesop was trying to make. Aesop explained, *"If you keep a bow always bent, it will break eventually; but if you let it go slack, it will be more fit for use when you want it."*

Aesop was talking about balance. And Jesus wants us to have balance in our lives too.

One of the reasons we gather for worship each week is to revive our souls. We need to shut the world out and focus on God's presence in our lives. Jesus knew the value of getting away to a quiet place. Most of you have built in some time to get away this summer. Some of you are recovering from your vacation now. Maybe you've gone back to work to rest up from your vacation. Vacations are great. But even vacations are not enough. God commands that we remember the Sabbath. We do that each week by coming to church for worship. I don't think God commands this just for God's sake. God knows we need time to come renew our souls in the presence of the One who gave us life and gave His life for us.

Balance. It was the way we were created. It's God's will for your life. Is your life in balance today? Ask for God's help in making whatever changes you need to. You will have a better life, a better relationship with your family, and a better relationship with your God. And isn't that what you want for yourself?

AMEN.