

**Sermon preached by Tom Haynes at St. Elizabeth's, Culver
July 19, 2009
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost – Year B (Proper 11)**

**2 Samuel 7:1-14a
Psalm 89:20-37
Ephesians 2:11-22
Mark 6:30-34, 53-56**

“May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be an acceptable offering in your sight, Oh Lord, my strength and my redeemer.”

I would like every one to take a look at the Gospel for today. As Susan and I start thinking about sermons early in the week, we always go through the readings and talk to each other about the things we notice. As you look at the Gospel, is there anything that strikes you?

| Themes:
| Rest a while
| Sheep w/o a shepherd
| Touching fringe of cloak and being healed

I am a guy who can relate to the “rest a while.” I knew this would be something that caught your eye, because I think as a society, we don’t get enough sleep. We don’t rest enough. Ask someone how they are doing, and if they are honest, they will tell you they are tired. Children are tired at school. Adults are tired at work. Fatigue is part of American life right now.

As you folks know I am taking classes at Notre Dame right now, and the teacher Thursday said we all looked tired, so he had us stand up to stretch and then handed out hymn books to sing a hymn. If any of you start looking bored and begin fumbling for a hymn book this morning, I’ll try to wind things up quickly.

Our culture is one where we are always on the go. We eat at our desks and work through lunch, and in today’s reading, the disciples are so busy that they don’t have time to eat. I guess maybe it is not just our culture. Maybe it is human nature to be tired and have a long to-do list. I know I see a lot of it, and I bet you do as well.

I am going to put this “tired” theme aside for a minute, and come back to it.

I am going to give you something else to think about. I would like you to think of someone who has made a difference in your life. Just for the point I want to make, don’t think of someone with a complex role in your life like a mother or a husband. Think of someone who was part of your life a long time ago or someone you don’t know very well. This time I am not going to call on anyone, so you don’t have to worry about that.

Do you have someone in mind? Most people when asked about something like this will think of a teacher they had in elementary school or a coach maybe. You may have thought of someone who told you that you could write well. You may be thinking about the nameless nurse who held your hand and told you everything would be alright when you were in the emergency room. Every one of us has a story like this.

Now the reason that I wanted you to think of something small is that my point is that we do not have to be heroic to make a difference. In the book group Tuesday, we said at one point that our actions don't have to be black and white. We were thinking about examples of suffering for Christ, and I think we were stuck in this mode where we were thinking of being burned at the stake or eaten by lions as one option. This seems like suffering to all of us. Then we think about going out to lunch with friends, and that does not seem like suffering at all.

I don't want to repeat too much of my material this morning, but we need to think small and understand that we suffer when a child goes off to college. It is possible to serve as a witness to God's love and grace and not be St. Paul. There are degrees of behavior, and we don't even have to know or be conscious of it I claim. Getting back to my example with the nurse, it is possible that nurse never thought twice about something you will never forget. Small, seemingly insignificant acts of kindness that can make a profound difference.

Now think of those people who wanted to touch the fringe of cloak of Jesus. They were healed. You are those people who are touched by Jesus. Those people who made a difference in your life were the cloak of Jesus for you.

Now the second part of the message is the fact that you are that cloak for other people. You need to understand that you are the person who holds the hand or tells the child "That is really good. You are a great writer. Do you save the things you write?"

Now I am not talking about the three foot participation trophy that everyone seems to get for completing the second grade these days. I am talking about sincere kindness, and I am talking about the kind of genuine thing that makes a difference.

Let's go back to the reading and I am going to talk about being tired again.

In the reading, the disciples gather around Jesus, and they all want to tell him what they have been doing. What they want I think is some affirmation. They want Jesus to be impressed with all they have done. They have been heroes you see, and they have been doing the work of the kingdom.

Now if Jesus were a businessman today, he would collect his sales reports and identify some new goals for the road warriors. The disciples would be given some incentives and sent back out to work some more. Jesus does not work like this though. Jesus gives the disciples what they need. Jesus tells them "Come away to a deserted place all by

yourselves and rest a while.”

This had to be a breath of fresh air to the disciples. This is a long cool drink of water on a hot day. What the disciples need is to be less busy. They need it for themselves, and Jesus knows they need it to be effective disciples. I can tell you that resting in God’s presence sounds pretty good to me, and I can bet it sounded really good to the disciples.

I am going to give you an experiment in “resting in the Lord,” and I will pick this up in a future sermon. As part of your prayers in the next week, I would like for you to try to simply sit quietly and be aware of God’s presence in your life for five quiet minutes. If you have to think about something to make it work for you, think of the words “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.”

Now here are the takeaways this morning.

We are called to discipleship. Each of us has work to do for the kingdom.

We all are the fringe of the cloak of Jesus for other people we may never really know. There is a challenge to us here, and as we live with compassion and charity for our neighbors, we make a difference.

We thought of people who touched us and left us better because of it. Each of us can be that person, and each of us is called to be that person.

If we feel a weariness or busy-ness about our spiritual lives, we are doing it wrong. Jesus calls us to rest in Him. It is by doing this that we can be effective disciples.

*I have said these words in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen*