

MATTHEW 14:13-22

When Jesus heard (about John the Baptist's beheading), he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late. Send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said to them, "They need not go away. You give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed them, he went up the mountain by himself to pray...

TEN MINUTES

Matthew 14:13-23

This is not a sermon about crowd size. Nor is it a sermon about capital punishment. Neither is it a sermon about the miraculous (because the next ten verses relate how Jesus walked on the water when he later met up with the disciples who were in the boat after he had separated from them). And it isn't a sermon about faith—or the lack thereof—when Peter tries to do the same and nearly drowns. All of these are worthy themes which have accrued many miles from pulpits across the world for the centuries. Rather, it is a sermon about taking time for yourself in this busy, hectic world we not only live in, but create for ourselves.

If we can go back in time to Jesus' ministry, we may realize we have failed to recognize how stressful it must have been. Once it gained traction, the demands upon him increased exponentially. From an organizational standpoint, he had to manage twelve very different personalities, men who all had their strengths and liabilities, issues of absence from their families and certainly their group dynamics with all of the interpersonal issues that cropped up. Add to that the fund raising from his patrons like Mary of Magdala to finance his ministry.

To that you must add the pressures created by his growing reputation of being a renowned teacher and healer of both the mentally and physically ill. Oh, and then there were the Pharisees who were constantly challenging him and the growing number of underlying threats against his life.

I am not sure we ever really consider in detail what Jesus' life must have been like. But when you stand back from the obvious in this passage, you get a flavor for the pressure upon him. He was an emotional man. John the Baptist was his cousin with whom he had plenty of childhood experiences as we all do with our cousins. He was clobbered by the news of his beheading at the hands of our old friend, Herod. And he needed to get away so *he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself*. Good luck with that because *when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns*. It seems he could not even get Ten Minutes to himself to grieve. It got even worse from there. *When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd and he had compassion for them and cured their sick*. By now, he was completely spent and here come his disciples with another problem to be solved. Everybody was hungry and there were no McDonalds, Chipotle's or any place else to buy food. Which leads us to the famous narrative of the loaves and fishes.

Surely by now he was completely exhausted so *Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to other side while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed them, he went up the mountain by himself to pray.* He badly needed those Ten Minutes.

I actually do not know how you young people with multiple children do it. Not only do you have your jobs with financial pressures upon you, you have meals to make, grocery shopping to do, homes to clean, laundry to keep up, clothes and school supplies to buy, homework to help with and oversee, extra-curricular activities to provide transportation to and from, school and family functions to attend, bills to pay and any volunteer work you might actually squeeze into your schedules. And some of you even have an elderly parent you are caring for. Yikes! Where can you even find Ten Seconds for yourself?

Jesus understands you, believe me! This is the reality of our lives—over worked, over committed, stressed out. I sometimes wonder why seem to intentionally do this. Are we trying to find meaning? Are we searching for happiness? Are we just trapped by expectations society has placed upon us? Or maybe we want all these things in our lives and have to find corners to keep cramming them into. And then all of our energy is required to try and keep control of it. Are we afraid if we sit down we'll

never get up? We fully understand the health related, emotional, relational and even financial consequences all of this can have over time. But we do it anyway because we are in denial believing we can get away with it. Like you, I am guilty as charged!

I am going to issue a challenge to all of us, myself included. Make finding Ten Minutes someplace in your busy day to withdraw from the demands upon your time and get away by yourself. Leave your phone behind. You can go take a walk if you want—being outside is best. And then become conscious of your thought processes and I will bet you that where they immediately go is the future and making a mental list on what you need to do next. It's hard to get away! But over time you will figure out that you do have control over where your mind is going and you can choose to temporarily leave your load by the roadside. You will also be amazed at the insights that occur to you as you leave space for the Spirit to speak.

Let Jesus be your example and your inspiration. Yes, there is work to be done. But rest is also necessary. Is Ten Minutes too long to take?

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