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Heavenly Father, though we do not deserve Your goodness, still You provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may acknowledge Your gifts, give thanks, for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

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

"Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." . . . . . *Mark 6:30-44, 53-56*

ONE OF MY favorite Old Testament stories is about Naaman, the Syrian army commander. Naaman is a very important guy. I picture him dressed in an impressive uniform, riding in a big chariot, and surrounded by his officers and staff. What happens is that Naaman contacts leprosy. His skin was a mess. Big, ugly blotches all over him.

HE GETS WORD from Elisha the prophet that he can be cured of his leprosy **by dipping himself in the Jordan River seven times,** yet he resists doing this. His officers and staff approach him and say, ***"Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something difficult and dangerous to cure your leprosy, certainly you would have done it. Then why not do something as simple as when dipping yourself seven times in the waters of the Jordan?***

NAAMAN IS A proud man, but he's not dumb. He concedes their point, goes straight to the Jordan, and by the time he's toweling himself off, the general's skin has become as fresh as the skin of a little child.

IN TODAY'S GOSPEL, Jesus, tells his disciples to do something. And, I believe, he often tells us to do the same thing. And he said to them, "Come away yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." {Mark 6:31] In other words, he tells us to take a break, and devote some time to being rather than doing.

YET OFTEN WE ignore this command. We want to follow Jesus, and are willing to take action, but when it comes to rest, when it comes to Jesus telling us to take a break for a while, then we respond as Naaman did at first: we would do something big and brave, but and is too simple, we say, and so we ignore what Jesus tells us.

JESUS HAS HIS reasons for inviting the disciples to rest. They have just returned from a mission on which he had dispatched them. He had sent them out in pairs and in haste. **They were not to encumber themselves with gear or supplies,** but simply trust local hospitality to meet their needs. ***They were not to linger where they were not wanted.*** Instead, they were to be on the move, calling people to repentance, casting out demons, anointing the sick. It was work they had never done before, and when they returned, they must have been exhausted.

THE DISCIPLES HAVE returned from their travels, but the pace has not slackened. As today's Gospel reports, "many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat." Does that scene sound familiar to you? Many are coming and going and they have no leisure even to eat.

JESUS LISTENS TO the disciples as they report on all they did and taught in the numerous places they visited. He does not, however, tell them to through themselves into action again with greater abandon. He doesn't ask them to do something difficult and dangerous, big and brave. Instead, what he asks for is disarming in its simplicity: "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest for a while." {Mark 6:31]

JESUS INVITES US to rest, yet we treat rest as a four-letter word. If people are resting, we may be suspicious of them. If we are resting, we may be suspicious of ourselves. There's always more to do, further ways to justify our existence by what we produce. In the face of this, Jesus smiles and says, "Come away to a desert place all by yourselves and rest for a while." {Mark 6:31]

IF ASKED, MOST of us could recite something of the pattern of our work as we engage in it day by day, week by week. I wonder, though: *Can we do the same regarding our rest?* ***Do we have patterns established that insure that going off by ourselves to rest a while is a reality for us.***

WE MAY LACK such patterns of rest, but we can take steps to establish them. Gradually we can build into our lives **rhythms of rest** and **solitude to balance out** the work rhythms.

WE TRY TO function without the rest of which Jesus invites us to "lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul."
{Psalm 23: 2]

WHAT WE ARE asked to do is equally simple, to slip into the *healing waters of a life that makes room for regular rest, a life marked by Sabbath time.*

COME TO ME, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my YOKE upon you, and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For your YOKE is easy, and my burden is light. {Matthew 11:28-30]

SURELY GOODNESS AND mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. {Psalm 23:6]. Amen

A Spiritual Writing Meditation
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May Loren's love and passion for God's word, shine through his words as he encourages all of us to grow in grace. Please enjoy ***The Faith Focus****; a series featuring spiritual writings from Loren.*