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Mark 6:30-34, 53-56  
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“Come Away”  
Rev. Dr. Brandon S. Perrine

*<sup>30</sup>The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup>And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. <sup>33</sup>Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.*

*<sup>53</sup>When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. <sup>54</sup>When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, <sup>55</sup>and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. <sup>56</sup>And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.*

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Two factory workers were talking. The woman said, “I can make the boss give me the day off.” The man replied, “And how would you do that?” The woman said, “Just wait and see.” She then hung upside down from the ceiling. The boss came in and said, “What are you doing?” The woman replied, “I’m a light bulb.” The boss then said, “You’ve been working so much that you’ve gone crazy. I think you need to take the day off.” The

man started to follow her and the boss said, “Where are you going?” The man said, “I'm going home, too. I can't work in the dark.”<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes, you just need time off, right? Work, family, health issues, money issues, relationship issues, the pandemic—life has a way of just getting to us and sometimes we need time off.

I think Jesus got it. Our reading this morning from Mark's gospel finds Jesus and the disciples reunited after the disciple's first mission trip in Galilee. According to Mark, they'd preached to the people, cast out many demons, and cured many sick. They were back together again and could finally swap stories. It's not hard to imagine that while they were excitedly telling of their adventures, Jesus noticed the tired in their eyes, the exhaustion in their posture, their sore-looking feet. They needed time off and he knew it. “Come away,” he said, “to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” Jesus understood the need for time off, for rest and renewal, for sabbath, for self-care.

No doubt we've heard self-help gurus talking about self-care on T.V. or a podcast or stumbled across one of the thousands of blogs and online posts related to the topic. If you enter “self-care” in the search bar on Amazon, you'll get over 40,000 results with titles like *A Year of Self-Care: Daily Practices and inspiration for Caring for Yourself*, *The Teacher's Guide to Self-Care*, *The Power Of Self-Care: A 21 Day Guide to Becoming a New You*, *The Witch's Book of Self-Care: Magical Ways to Pamper, Soothe, and Care for Your Body and Spirit*, and *Knock Knock Self-Care RX Nifty Notes*. Self-care is a big topic in the self-help world of pop-psychology and, to be honest, there's good reason for it. Many of us are, quite frankly, really bad at it. We might watch or listen to someone speak about it, we may read about it, we may add self-care to our already packed planners, we may even preach about it, but many of us don't actually practice it. And it's a problem.

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<sup>1</sup> “Joke #6019,” Unijokes.com, <https://unijokes.com/joke-6019/>.

Dr. Shainna Ali warns that “neglecting personal care can cause increases in anxiety, distractibility, anger, and fatigue. You may also experience decreases in sleep, relationship satisfaction, self-esteem, empathy, and compassion. Ongoing exposure to stress without proper self-care can put you at risk for serious consequences such as depression and heart disease.”<sup>2</sup> But self-care is hard work, especially in a society that teaches that in order to be a good worker, you’ve got to put in 60 hours a week at the office and have your cellphone at hand 24/7; that in order to be a good parent, you’ve got to run yourself ragged getting kids to and from one activity after another, after another; that in order to be a well-rounded student, you’ve got to run track, maintain a 3.8 GPA, work a part time job, play in the band, participate in clubs, and volunteer at the senior center. Self-care is hard work in a culture that teaches us that the value of our days is measured by our productivity.

In the midst of all that hustle and bustle Jesus calls out: “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” He understood the need for time off, for rest and renewal, for sabbath, for self-care. And we would do well to follow his example.

As progressive people of faith, we acknowledge that there is a lot of work to be done. The world in which we live is still far from Jesus’ vision of the realm of heaven in our midst. There is hunger and poverty and illness and racism and inequality all around us and we are tasked to combat them. We are taught to give of ourselves for the sake of others and our world. But, as evangelical pastor Joyce Meyer would remind us, “You cannot give away something you don't have in you. How can someone love another person if they don't love themselves? You cannot give away something you don't have in you.”<sup>3</sup> She’s right. The ills of the world and the challenges of every-day life, work, school, family—these require us

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Shainna Ali. “Why Your Self-Care Isn’t Working,” Psychologytoday.com, January 6, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/modern-mentality/201901/why-your-self-care-isn-t-working>.

<sup>3</sup> Meyer, Joyce. *Living a Life You Love*. Faithwords: Nashville, 2018.

to be at our best. And we simply cannot be at our best if we're not caring for ourselves. We can't give away what we don't have, try as we might.

I don't know what self-care looks like for you, but I do know that we all need to be doing it. This week, I challenge you to pay attention to your body, to your mind, to your spirit. Take note of feelings of anxiety, distractibility, anger, and fatigue. Pay attention to your relationships for signs of disfunction. Take your life's temperature, so to speak. How are you doing? Then, commit to doing one new thing or eliminating one old thing, just one thing to care for yourself, to rest your body, to renew your mind, to observe sabbath. And follow through.

Jesus noticed the tired in his friends' eyes, the exhaustion in their posture, their sore-looking feet. They needed time off and he knew it. "Come away," he said, "to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." Jesus understood the need for time off, for rest and renewal, for sabbath, for self-care. May it be so too with us. Amen.