

If you ever have the chance to visit New York City, most people take the opportunity to visit the Statue of Liberty. After the ferry ride over to Ellis Island, there is much to see. On the inner walls of the pedestal of the statue you will find these famous words, “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore, Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!” These words have provided comfort for many people since 1903. Those words about rest and breathing free were exactly what many tempest-tossed immigrants have set their hopes upon.

We here at St. Paul’s have had much excitement over the last several months. In June, we celebrated as I was ordained and installed as pastor. And shortly after that, we all scurried around getting ready for the one hundredth and twenty fifth celebration. Things have been buzzing around here. There was rarely a morning, afternoon, or evening that Jaimee and I spent out here in the country that we didn’t see someone working at the church. And it all paid off. Over four hundred people joined us to celebrate. The worship services were great; the food was terrific; the fellowship was wonderful. But now the tent is down, we didn’t quite have 400 hundred people here last week. Jaimee and I joked that the Monday after the celebration was dead quiet out here, not one person was out the entire day. So should we be concerned? Should I as your Pastor try to rile you all back up into the pre-celebration excitement? Should I try to funnel the excitement that has been here into a new area or effort? As I read the gospel text for the day, I decided my answer. Listen to Jesus advice to the tempest-tossed disciples back from casting out demons and evangelizing the nations. He said, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.

So perhaps the answer to the busyness that we have had here at St. Paul's is not to create more busyness. Perhaps, for a while, the answer is rest. No, it is not a permanent vacation, but a rest, a Sabbath you might say. Our world places little worth in rest. If you are not busy, you are not worth anything. But God has and always a different perspective. He knew from day one that his creation needed rest. And so on the seventh day he set the example. Genesis 2:2 says, "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."

Throughout the entire bible, God called his people to take a Sabbath over and over again. The seventh day was for rest. Even while the Israelites wandered in the desert, God ensured a day of rest by bringing enough manna on the sixth day, so that his people could rest on the seventh. God even made sure things like servants, foreigners, and animals got their rest. He went as far as to order that the land be given rest every seven years once they entered the Promised Land. But most importantly he made sure his people got rest. As Jesus reminded the Pharisees, man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man. The Sabbath was around because people need rest.

Even Jesus himself, being human, was not immune to the need for rest. The bible tells us that he often went away to rest from the crowds and talk to God.

That is the type of rest that God calls us to also I believe. It is a Sabbath type rest. The Sabbath day has always been about two things, rest and time with God. So this rest that we can take today also is not a break from God. It is not a break from church. It is not a break from Christian living. It is a break from busyness of the last months so that we might get focus on the things of God. God has always been in the business of

making times of rest holy. He sanctifies our rest through his holy word, and his holy supper. He sanctifies our rest by being present in that rest.

No, the trip to Ellis Island is not necessary to find rest. For there you will only find a bronze plaque with words about rest. Rather we know that for rest, we come here into God's house. Here in his house we meet again a man who once said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." These are not just words that have been bronzed, but promises made sure on the cross and at the empty tomb. They are words of a creator and redeemer who knows his creation. So for a while, we rest in his arms trusting in his promise.

One other thing though must be said about our text. Almost as soon as the disciples got away to rest, the needy people followed. Jesus did not say, get away we are resting, but rather he fed the 5000 with five loaves and two fish. So also, the rest that we might be enjoying here at St. Paul's does not remove us from needy people either. Our rest ends when our neighbor needs arises. If someone needs our help, we gladly rise and feed them with God's Word and sustain them with our loving actions.

It is always said that God didn't create anything on the seventh day. While that is partly true, he did fashion one thing that day, rest. And ever since he has made sure that his people get that rest from busyness in order to focus on him. Each rest that we have in this world can only prepare us for our final rest in heaven. There with all of family and friends laid in our cemetery, there with all the Christians around the world, and there with our God, we will rest eternally.