

A Sermon Preached at Maple Street Congregational Church, UCC
Danvers, MA
Rev. Kevin M Smith
July 22, 2018
Mark 6:30-34

Sabbath Love

Have you ever wondered what Jesus and his disciples were doing just before Jesus fed the five thousand on the hillside? Our scriptures leave a lot to our imaginations. It seems that everything we read in the Bible has some incredible significance and meaning. Every chapter of the life of Jesus and the disciples that we hear about is like reading some epic story. There is always some big news happening when Jesus and his crowd were in town, or on the hillside, or out in a boat on the lake, or just about any where they go there is some huge story to tell about.

Didn't these guys ever take a rest? Did they never take a weekend off and binge their favorite Netflix series? Whatever happened to going out to a nice seafood restaurant and having some clams, lobsters, and a little white wine? Were Jesus and his disciples all a bunch of Type A frenetic do-gooders? If Jesus and his group were teleported into today's Boston we could bet that they never took in a ballgame at Fenway. Heaven forbid they sit still for three, or four, or five hours and watch a bunch grown men try to hit a tiny sphere traveling 100 miles per hour over a plate just to get home.

Reading the Bible should make us all feel guilty that we take weekends off to play with our kids or visit our friends home and have BBQs out in their backyard. And how about all those MSC folks that are not in church this morning. Why, those heathens! They are probably off visiting some beautiful landscape taking selfies of themselves and posting them on Facebook to make us all jealous that we are sitting here. Well, at least we have air conditioning! The Bible is so full of action and legend and people doing this miracle and that astounding feat and half our congregation is out having the weekend off or on vacation! Don't they know Jesus is watching! What's that old bumper sticker saying, "Jesus is coming. Look busy." (*Show card!*)

Whatever happened to the fourth commandment? Hear it from the King James Version of the Bible:

Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

I don't know about you but I always give my manservant and my maidservant Sunday off!

It seems that if Jesus and his disciples weren't harvesting food on the Sabbath and getting in trouble for it they were doing some other good thing. At least if we read our Bible literally that what we should think.

Truth is folks, I'm pretty sure these fine fellows, and I'm sure there were women, too, were flesh and blood people just like us. I think there are a lot of things about the life of Jesus and his followers that never made it into the scriptures. The Bible is like watching a movie trailer or teaser about upcoming attractions, it only talks about the really important parts of the life of our holy actors. All the times they took care of the daily chores, like cleaning the house, or making dinner, or just plain sitting around with their friends reminiscing about the old times just didn't make it into our sacred book of holy highlights.

Well, back to the question I started with—what were Jesus and his fine followers doing just before feeding the five thousand. Truth be told, according to *The Message* version we read from this morning, they were trying to find a few minutes for “taking a break and get[ting] a little rest.” In the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible it reads Jesus “said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’” My goodness, Jesus was encouraging them to chill and lay back for awhile.

You know I think the Jesus we don't know much about probably had his priorities straight. He new when to take a break. Remember when he was sleeping in the boat in the middle of the storm? Remember the story of Jesus kicking back and celebrating the wedding of a friend in Cana and how he protested when his mother demanded that he go to work and turn the water in wine? Remember when Jesus was playing the good host and barbecuing some fish on the beach for his disciples who were out early in the morning fishing? And those are just the stories that were written about. Let's never forget that Jesus and his followers were just flesh and blood like us and they had to take

care of the every day things of living and could also know how to have fun and take a break.

Of course, despite Jesus' good intentions on this day trying to get his disciples to take a break his good plans were foiled when they arrived at what they thought would be a deserted place to kick back and there they were, five thousand people waiting for them! Poor Jesus and his disciples they were victims of their own evangelizing success!

Folks, we should all be so successful in our efforts to be the church, to spread the Good News of God's love, compassion, and forgiveness. But, don't forget to take care of yourself and do the hard work of taking Sabbath rests from your labors. God thought it was important enough that in creating the earth God created a day of rest. And, when people forgot about this, God had it carved into stone tablets. We all need time to recharge our batteries and have sustained moments to reflect on the old times, the times ahead, and how much we love our families and friends and want to frolic with them in joy. When the rushing to and fro of your days builds up mega-stress levels within you get away to a deserted place and take a break. God knows you deserve it. God knows you need it. God demands you take it. Remember the Sabbath day to make it holy. Amen. (See you when I return from my vacation!)