**SUNDAY 7/18/21**

**SERMON**

**MARK 6:30-34, 53-56**

A missionary planned a long journey through the jungles of Africa.

Tribesmen from the area were hired to carry the provisions for the trip.

The first day they marched rapidly and went a long distance.

The missionary was thrilled with the speedy progress they had made.

He had high hopes of completing the journey much faster than he expected.

However, the next morning the tribesmen refused to move.

For some strange reason they simply sat down and rested.

The missionary asked the leader of the tribesmen

          about this strange and unexpected behavior.

 He was informed that they had gone too fast the first day,

          and that the tribesmen were now waiting

          for their souls to catch up with their bodies.

Often in our lives everything seems to be so chaotic and fast paced,

          that we need to slow down, and let our souls catch up with us.

We rarely find God in the hectic moments of our lives,

          yet we often experience his presence in the peace and quietness

          as we slow down, and let our souls catch up with our bodies.

Remember the story of Elijah who was told to stand on the mountain

          in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord was about to pass by.

The Lord wasn't in the great and powerful wind that shattered the rocks.

He wasn't in the earthquake,

          or the fire which followed it.

But Elijah experienced the Lord's presence in the quiet, gentle whisper.

Jesus knew how tiring ministry can be.

He knew what it felt like to heal people,

          to have the press of the crowds upon him,

          to preach from town to town until his voice was hoarse,

          to get so caught up in God's business that daily needs were forgotten.

When his followers returned from their missionary journey,

          they were happy and excited about all they had accomplished.

But Jesus knew they needed to take some time away from the crowds,

          to rest and recuperate from all their efforts.

They needed to take some time to let their souls catch up to their bodies.

It is very easy to get caught up in everything we are doing:

          we rush and hurry and get so involved in meetings,

          Bible studies, visiting the sick, caring for the needy,

          feeding the hungry, helping our neighbors, and on and on.

In order to do God's work in this world,

          we need to stop at times, and rest in God's presence.

If we neglect to spend some quiet time with God,

          away from the troubles and difficulties,

          we will become too exhausted to accomplish very much at all.

Our Heavenly Father knew our weaknesses.

That is why He established the Sabbath Rest.

Without it we become exhausted.

It is important to note that Sabbath keeping is for our benefit.

It is for our own good.

It is one of the Commandments.

The purpose of the Sabbath is to preserve our strength and to prevent burnout,

          to stop all that we are doing,

          and purposely reconnect with God.

Every seven days we need time to recharge:

           physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

When we come away to our own deserted places,

          we are renewed and refreshed by God's love.

Then we are able to share his gifts with the world.

The 23 rd Psalm reminds us God makes us lie down in green pastures,

          he leads us beside quiet waters,

          he restores our souls.

He lets our souls catch up to our bodies.

Then we are able to do his work throughout the world.

Jake and Walter were both skilled woodsmen.

One day Walter challenged Jake to an all-day tree chopping contest,

          to decide who could cut the most wood.

Walter worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break.

However, Jake had a leisurely lunch, and took several breaks during the day.

At the end of the day, Walter was surprised and annoyed      to discover

          that his friend Jake had chopped substantially more wood than he had.

"I don't understand," he said.

          "Every time I checked, you were taking a rest,

          yet you chopped more wood than I did."

Jake replied with a laugh:

          "But you didn't notice," he said,

“That I was sharpening my ax whenever I sat down to rest.”

When we keep ourselves sharp, yet take rest when we need it,

          we are able to do so much more.

It really isn't about how busy we are,

          but how much we are able to accomplish for God.

AMEN