

## Sermon Notes – July 18, 2021

(Mark 6:30-44)

Today, I want to talk a little bit different about this lesson. Many times we focus on the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000. Sometimes, in your Sunday School lessons, you talk about having a quiet time – spending time to rest and spending quality time with Jesus. Today, I want to talk just a little bit about interruptions. How many of you ever feel like your day is just one interruption after another? You get distracted; you get drained of energy; you get detracted from what your purpose is in life or your goals for that day. I often experience that. Sometimes I've written out a list of about ten things I'd like to get done that day; then, I come to work and guess how many I get done? ... Sometimes zero... sometimes one or two and that's it – because there is always something that comes up. All of us deal with interruptions, don't we?

Jesus dealt with interruptions. Do you remember the story from a few weeks ago in which Jarius, the synagogue ruler came to Jesus? He wanted Jesus to go to his house and heal his daughter who was nigh unto death. On the way, in the crowd, Jesus is touched by a woman. He's interrupted by this woman who had a bleeding issue and she wanted Jesus to heal her. She believed that if she just touched the hem of his garment that she would be made well – and she was. But, Jesus knew that power had gone out of him. *Now, Jesus is on the way to somebody's house, but he's interrupted by a woman* - a woman who had no value in their society -- a woman who touched him and wasn't supposed to touch a man in public – and Jesus stopped and healed her.

Today, in our gospel lesson, Jesus had been preaching and teaching; Herod the Great had just beheaded his cousin, John the Baptist and Jesus had sent the disciples off to preach, teach, and heal. The disciples are exhausted, physically tired, and spiritually drained, and Jesus knows that they need time to get away and rest. He needs time with them, too. He says, “Come by yourselves to a place with me where we can get some rest.” Did you notice what happened? ... All the people followed him right where he was going. ***They see him and they interrupt him.***

***How do we deal with our interruptions and integrate them positively in our lives?*** I want you to notice how Jesus did it. Jesus saw the people and he said, “They are like sheep without a shepherd.” (That is a metaphor from the Old Testament when Moses talked about the Israelites.) “They need guidance. They need provision. They need protection. They need help.” Jesus felt compassion for them and he allowed himself to be interrupted.

**How did he integrate that into his life positively? I think it’s because Jesus knew his purpose. He had clarified his mission from God – his purpose as the Son of God – to tell God’s love and forgiveness to enable us to be the body of Christ – to call us to be a light to the world.** Jesus knew who he was and what he was about. He came to live, minister, preach, teach, heal, die for our sins, and be resurrected that we might have eternal life. He never lost sight of his purpose of who he was as the Son of God. ***Sometimes, I think we need to remember our purpose as disciples of Christ, who we’re called as servants.*** Jesus said, “I came not to be served, but to serve. I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”

When Toscanini, the Italian musical conductor, was 88-years old, he was asked to conduct the BBC Orchestra in Albert Hall in London, England. He did a masterful job – powerful job! When he was finished, the Board of Trustees met to vote on him as their permanent conductor. (He was 88-years old.) They voted on him to be their permanent conductor and gave him a contract of two-years to sign. When they announced it to him, he chuckled and said, “I’m rather disappointed. I was hoping you’d give me a ten year contract.” Do you think he had a clear purpose in teaching music and being a conductor?

**Sometimes, when we’re interrupted, we have to remember who we are as disciples of Christ and our purpose and God’s mission for us.** We’re interrupted because of unexpected company. We get phone calls in the middle of the night. We get interrupted in our plans of going shopping or golfing by a phone call asking for a favor. ***Jesus always remembered his purpose in serving others.*** But, I want you to see something greater

that affects us: *That is: Jesus always remembered that people were more valuable than things. People have eternal value.*

There's a story about a 51-year-old Methodist Minister whose name was Patrick Skidmore. He served a church in southern California. At 51-years of age, he went to the doctor and was diagnosed with inoperable cancer and was told he had six to twelve months to live. He was one of those dynamite guys - one of those folks who was always goal-oriented, success-oriented, had a big church, and big plans for everybody. He was always thinking ahead of what was next. But, when he found out he had cancer, he changed his life. He said, "You know, I was one who was driven by my ambitions and what I wanted to accomplish. When people came up to talk to me, I was always focused on myself and what my next goal, plan, etc. was going to be rather than really listening to them.

Sometimes, I was inattentive to those people and unkind. When he found out he had cancer, he wrote his church a letter which said, "Dear Christian friends, In reading the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus said, 'Don't be anxious about anything, not even your life;' I didn't understand it for a long time. I'm 51-years-old and 30-years a Christian, and it's taken me until now to understand what he meant. I take each day one day at a time because I don't know how much time I have to serve you or to live. But every day becomes more meaningful than the day before and more than it's ever been. I want to promise you something: Each person I meet will have all of me there is in the few moments that we have together that day. I don't know how long I have to live and I may not accomplish as much as I did in the past, but I'm living with more peace and am less anxious. Bear with me." I wonder if we wouldn't say about Pastor Skidmore that he learned to live victoriously with one of the biggest interruptions - that of cancer - in his life. I wonder if he didn't regain a perspective on the value of people over things and he also had a clear purpose - that he was going to be there for others and to serve.

Yes, we have interruptions - they drain us; they physically tire us; they emotionally drain us; they distract us and sometimes get us away from all that we had to accomplish that day. **But, Jesus learned to integrate**

**positively his interruptions by remembering his purpose and his mission as the Son of God. We are called to remember our purpose as the children of God and servants. We are called to always reclaim the value of human life and people over things.**

Last week or the week before, I told you a story about the Pastor who was called in the middle of the night to come because someone's daughter was threatening suicide. "Pastor, would you come to our house?" He got up, got dressed, and he and his wife went to the home. He finally persuaded the child to come out of her room. The child and the parents argued and fussed the whole time. If you remember, he said he took the child aside in the kitchen and asked, "What is really going on?" She said, "All I want is for my parents to listen to, love me, and spend time with me. I don't want all the things they have." What she was saying was, "I want them to value ME and love ME." That's what people need in the world today - to know they are loved, valued, and appreciated.

And, yes, sometimes people get under my skin; sometimes they get under your skin, and those interruptions just knock us out sometimes, don't they? Sometimes I feel like the person who says, "My life is one interruption after another." Sometimes I feel like Norman Cousins, the late editor of the Saturday Review who said, "My job is presiding over interruptions." Sometimes I feel like that. Interruptions can be integrated positively in our lives if we regain our perspective that values people over things. Sometimes that golfing, TV program, or shopping that is so important to me may have to be pushed aside because someone needs my attention. Is it good to have time for that? ... Yes, I'm not saying don't take time for yourself. But, when you are dealing with interruptions, remember that ***Jesus always placed a priority of people over things. He remembered who he was and he calls us to remember who we are as his servants.***

In the gospel lesson today, Jesus called his disciples away to get some rest. I want you to know in that story that we never found out if they actually got to rest. Did Jesus go off to teach and they were off resting? I can't help but wonder if they weren't because if you read on, it says, "And

they came to the end of day and they said, ‘Hey Jesus, why don’t you send those people home to get some food? It’s getting late and we don’t have enough food to feed them.’” So, I wonder if maybe they did get some rest. We all need it for balance in our lives. We also need time with Jesus because sometimes he just wants to tell us when it’s quiet that he loves us and he’s present with us. Sometimes he wants to correct something in our lives to tell us we need to work on it or let go of it.

I heard a cute story about a Pastor who had a friend named Cici who had a little boy that was two-years old named John. John had one of those little stuffed animals that was a security blanket. You know how kids won’t let go of it – they take it to the bathroom, to school, to nap, to bed, etc. He had a stuffed gorilla and its nickname was “Rilla.” He took Rilla with him wherever he went. The seams were busted; the stuffing was coming out, and Mom had to slip in and wash it when he was taking a nap. It got so bad that John came to her and said, “Mommy, fix it! Mommy, fix it!” But, he wouldn’t let go of it. She finally got frustrated and said, “Son, I can’t fix it until you let go of it!” Sometimes I wonder if God doesn’t want to tell us in our quiet time that, “There are some things that I want to fix in your life, but you’ve got to let go of it so I can work on it.” We need balance in our lives -- time to rest physically, but also time with God so he can speak to us and we can listen. We need to be able to deal with our interruptions.

And, then I want you to ask, did Jesus really do a miracle that day in feeding the 5,000 or did he inspire the people to share... or a little of both? I hope you’ll go back and read the story in Mark 6:30-44. What does God want to say to you and me? May God bless the reading of his Word and the proclamation. Amen.