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St. Barnabas Episcopal Church  
9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost/Year B/Proper 11  
July 22, 2018  
Text: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

*In the Name of the One, Holy, and Living God. Amen.*

Today's gospel comes two weeks after we heard how Jesus sent his disciples out on their own two by two. They had been sent with nothing extra in tow-no food, no bag, and no money-only armed with the authority of Jesus. Today they have come back, exhausted yet excited, with stories to tell Jesus. Stories of healings, anointings, of calling people to repentance, casting out demons, and preaching the good news. It seems the disciples ministered so well that crowds followed them from the places they had been. They wanted to be close to those who had turned their lives around and possibly given them hope. The crowds also flocked to see to the One most of them had probably already heard about, the Man from Nazareth who had already performed many miracles.

As much as the disciples were anxious to tell Jesus about their journeys, Jesus sensed that his disciples needed a break as much as did he. Jesus had also been going about his ministry and he had recently received word that his cousin John had been beheaded. And though he grieved, people continued to need him. Ministry had not come to a standstill. Ministry never does. They were all in need of rest but with the crowds, rest was hard to come by. So Jesus tells them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." 'Let's get away.' But when they got to their place of retreat they found no peace because crowds were there too and rest was not to be. It was so bad that the weary party could not even eat without interruption.

The crowd heard they were going to break camp and like a scene from the Keystone Cops, they rushed to get ahead of the disciples. They wanted more. Sure there must have been the crowd seekers, those looking for a good thrill, to see proof of who Jesus was. But also there among them were people anxious to hear that God was at work in the world, present in their lives, that God heard their cries. They needed to hear more stories of hope, to be recipients of Jesus' healing power, and a chance to be up close and personal with the famous rabbi from Nazareth. Mark doesn't tell us how the disciples reacted to being followed. Were they annoyed, cranky, rude? Did they turn their backs to the crowds? Walk away?

We are not told but we do know that Jesus looked out into the crowd. He looked out into the crowd and he saw all kinds of people-people who were sick in body and spirit, those pained by their circumstances. He saw people who were hungry and those unaccepted in their communities. People without hope. People in need of God's blessings. And Mark says, "*And he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd...*"

Jesus could not turn away from them.

Throughout all four gospels we see empathy in Jesus. We see his compassion. "*He had compassion*" we are told, again and again. Today's gospel is no exception. Even in his weariness, Jesus felt for the people surrounding him for though he was God, he was also human. And he knew firsthand what it meant to be alone, to be deserted, to doubt and be doubted, to be misunderstood, to hurt.

That Jesus had empathy and compassion says a lot about Jesus and about God for there are so many people who even today continue to believe that God is a God of vengeance, a God who is far off and uncaring, if they believe in God at all.

You and I are to mirror for others the caring and compassionate face of God for we live in a world in need, a world that seems to hold the short stick to compassion, the short stick in caring for people other than ourselves, especially those the world deems different in any way. You and I must get the word out that we know God who is love and is compassionate.

I am reminded of a story that one of Archbishop Tutu's daughters told on a visit to St. Louis many years ago. She told the story of a little boy who was awakened by claps of thunder and he saw the lightning light up his room again and again. He endured the storm for a good while and when the storm did not let up he finally called out for his father. His father came into his room and told him that everything would be fine. That the boy had no need to worry because God was with him. The boy looked up with tears in his eyes and said to his father, "I know that's right, but sometimes I just need somebody with skin on them."

And that is you and is me. Indeed anyone who says they are a believer, a follower of Jesus. For you see, we are the eyes, heart, and hands of God. We made this promise at our baptisms (or our godparents promised for us) that we would proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. We made a promise that we would seek and serve Christ in all (ALL) persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves. We've actually promised to keep on growing in our

compassion, to seek the image of God in people who are nothing like us, and to love them as we love ourselves.

All this is hard work. There is nothing easy about being loving and compassionate toward others. But this is what you and I are called to do. And when we find ourselves tired or worn or anxious-Jesus says ‘Come away and rest a while. Be with me and take a rest and begin again.’

I don’t know about you but I know that when I am tired, worn, and sore in need of rest-a vacation or just plain busy, well, sometimes I feel as though I cannot do another thing. I don’t want to hear the news. I am tempted to put off everyone else’s needs, to be in my own little world. Have any of you felt like this? I don’t like that feeling and to be honest when I do that I feel like that I feel worse than what my circumstances really are. Then I know that it is time to wrestle that devil off my shoulders and get in my ‘right mind’ as the old folks used to say. God can handle whatever it is you and I might personally be going through. Help and rest and strength are on the way. We can begin again.

There is an old gospel hymn that says, *“I don’t feel no ways tired. I’ve come too far from where I started from. Nobody told me that the road would be easy! I don’t believe God brought me this far to leave me.”* Indeed, He has!

You and I as individuals and as Church are called to imitate Jesus. We are called to look into the very eyes of our neighbors, our sisters and brothers, those we know and those we don’t. We are called to open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts, to use our voices, to build on our relationships, to make a difference, to show compassion, to help change the wrongs in this old world even if it is only a little bit at a time, to show someone else the loving and compassionate face of God.

Amen.