

**Pentecost 8 2021**

**July 18, 2021**

**Mark 6:30-34, 53-56**

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RSVP: If you've taken some French, or know something about etiquette, you know it stands for *Repondez s'il vous plait* (Reh-pon-day-see-vou-play), or "Please Respond"

Pretty simple, really, when it's included on an invitation: let me know if you're coming

Might wonder how a French term came to be included in American life--

In the Gilded Age of the Rockefellers and the Vanderbilts, it was fashionable to bring a little Europe to America

So, there were calling days, when ladies would present themselves and their card at someone else's home; formal dinners, formal invitations, and the engraved RSVP.

Anyone ignoring that requirement would be turned away at the door, should they be so audacious as to turn up without giving a written response!

One did not just scramble up an extra plate—it simply wasn't done

Have you talked to any brides and grooms lately? Hosted a birthday party? Tried to have an event?

If you have, you know that no matter how much you plan, today it seems that you *never* know who's going to show up until the moment. It's as if people are reluctant to commit, waiting maybe to see if they are going to get a better offer for how they'll spend their time. Maybe you've even been one of those people...

This morning there's an RSVP waiting for us; because Jesus is issuing an invitation: "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile."

It's an invitation first given to the disciples. They had been sent out by Jesus a few verses before to do ministry, two by two. I suppose you could call it a practice run for these early followers— they went to the towns and villages all around, preaching and healing

Verses in Mark don't tell us how long they were gone, but it must have been for awhile—in today's Gospel, the disciples come back to Jesus and tell him all that they have done. Jesus looks at them and sees something. What do you think it was? Well, excitement for sure, eagerness to share all that had happened; but also exhaustion, road-weariness, their sandals worn thin by the miles. They had been surrounded, it seems, just as Jesus was, by people—so many that the gospel today puts it plainly: “they had no leisure even to eat.”

The disciples looked very much like the crowd who were like “sheep without a shepherd,” Mark says, stirring this *compassion* deep within Jesus. Who sees their weariness, knows it so well himself, and so he says to them “Come away to a deserted place and rest awhile...Come away to a deserted place and rest awhile.”

Does that sound wonderful or what?...

This Gospel always comes as one of the readings during the summer—suppose the folks who plan these things think that's good because summertime is when we're all supposed to have more free time to rest. Might have been true at one time, but it seems like something of a joke now, especially after the last year and a half. Sure, there's no school—but wow, are most people making up for lost time with activities and traveling and spending time with friends and family.

And you probably know that no matter what the season, Americans work longer hours than anyone else in the industrialized world. Sure, a lot has changed since most people punched a clock and worked regular shifts—but all our technology has made us accessible to our workplaces 24/7, never more so than this past year.

Many people—some of you that are worshipping today—are *expected* to be “on” all the time for your work and for the people—children, parents, friends—who depend on you. We are frantic sometimes, running from one thing to another, keeping up with the expectations we seem to have and that others have for us. We sometimes live as if *everything* depends on us.

Many of us have even adopted a Chinese custom without knowing it—in that country, the polite response to the question “How are you?” is to say “I am very busy, thank you.”

This morning Jesus issues an invitation to us: “Come away and rest awhile.”

This is not “Hey, you really need a vacation!”—it’s something more, something deeper.

Do you know those instructions from the flight attendants that we all pretty much ignore?

“Should the oxygen masks drop down, put your own mask on first before assisting others...”

Unless we take time to breathe in the love and grace of God; unless we take time to love, really *love* the world God has made—we’re no good to anyone: not our family, not to our community, not our workplace, not ourself...because we have nothing to give...We aren’t able to share or show the love and grace of Christ to others because we are having such a hard time trusting it for ourselves.

“Come away and rest awhile.”

The invitation goes unfilled unless we respond—if sit here this morning and say well, that sounds great (sigh), receive this meal together, and then come to the close of worship and do nothing different in our lives, well, so what?

What would your RSVP to Jesus look like?

Turning off the streaming or the game console or horror—your phone!—and spending time, really *spending time* with the people God’s given you around you? A meal, a walk, a conversation, a listening ear that you’ve been meaning to give? Hopefully it’s some intentional prayer time in our day, to center ourselves in the love of Jesus who had such compassion for *all* people.

\*Only you know what your response could be—but we can rest assured: We’re not going to get a better offer...