

July 12, 2015 Pentecost 7

Matthew 11: 28-30

Have you ever had a Big Mac Attach?

Remember the old commercial; “You deserve a break today... at McDonalds!”

Do you remember singing it?

And how about this one? “Super size me.” For only 50 cents more you can have double the fries and soft drink, not to mention quadrupling the calories. We know how quickly fast food satisfies and how quickly it has us carving more empty carbs, and how quickly our waistline expands. The quick fix of fast food for our modern day stresses of information overload and over activity is so appealing and yet, so empty.

In **Jesus’** day close to 15% of the rural population had been turned off the land. They suffered the stress of struggling each day to find work to feed themselves and their families. The quick fix for the stress of **Jesus’** day appeared to be the feeding miracles of **Jesus**. But this didn’t make for disciples, just more folk hopeful for a handout. Infact the crowds get so big that **Jesus** couldn’t travel openly in some areas.

Jesus offers a different opportunity in our gospel lesson today. He suggests we exchange our heavy load of stresses that we drag around with us in favour of his load.

Most of the burdens we carry today are unnecessary: Those anxieties, worries and unresolved issues that pile up consciously and unconsciously. After a while they wear us down and wear us out.

Like a dog barking up the wrong tree, the solutions we seek often elude us. **Jesus** offers us another way, a different yoke. It is not busy for the sake of being busy. It is not overly intense for the sake of getting somewhere. It is not, having to save the world today or tomorrow. It is not so dramatic. **Jesus** declares that his way is more humble and gentle. His way calls us to our true selves – the real and only thing to share, the real and only thing we can share.

You see, **Jesus’** yoke is easy and light because it takes us as we are, to lead us to who we can become. It doesn’t require anything of us that isn’t potentially there. So, in any situation:

1. Show up. Get there.
2. Be present to who or what is going on.
3. Share who you are / live your truth in and for the situation.

4. Let go. Let go of the outcome. Let go of the process. Let go and let the moment go its own way.

This is the yoke that **Jesus** offers. However, as with all yokes, **Jesus'** yoke is intended to harness all who we are and guide the direction that we go.

Application for Today

Lay down your burdens and just show up. Be present. Tell your truth and let go. It is so much better that a Big Mac Attach! Amen.

Thomas: Logion 90

Thomas Merton, a 20th century contemplative, reminds us that, “Not all... are called to be hermits, but all... need enough silence and solitude in their lives to enable the deep inner voice of their own true self to be heard at least occasionally.”

We know this, but taking time for it is another story. We have all known those times when we just want to escape the noise, or the demanding little lives we are responsible for, or the never ending requirements of our work. We just want to escape to a quiet place. My mother's generation found Sunday worship to be that quiet place away from the demand of their kids. Here they found an hour of solitude and rest.

I know when Vicki is in need of that quiet time because I hear about her recurring dream. She owns a nice little bookstore. She is quietly reading and someone comes in and asks for a particular book. She says, “I don't have it. Go somewhere else.” And then goes back to her reading. At this point, I usually point out that this is not a very good business model but she is not interested in the business. She is just interested in solitude and her own little place to have it.

Needing to rest from the demands of life is not only a modern phenomenon as our scripture readings point out today. **Matthew's** version invites any and all and focuses on **Jesus'** humble and caring ways that offer rest.

Thomas on the other hand, has **Jesus** addressing just his disciples and requires something of them in order for them to know this rest. They must come into a relationship with him and they must seize the peace that they can discover through the process. There is much more action and requirement on our part in **Thomas'** version. We are the ones who must seize the peace and rest that becomes available through a deep connection with **Jesus**.

But we also know that we can't stay in that detached place forever. As Alfred North Whitehead commented, "Religion is what we do in our solitariness that drives us to worldly loyalty."

Seizing peace and rest drives us back into the world of busyness but with a different mind-set.

Richard Rohr established his centre for 'contemplation and action' because he found that the activists of the 60's and 70's were no different than the people they opposed. As he felt a growing discomfort in his participation in these various causes, he realized that these activists needed to seize rest and spiritual peace before they acted. Without it, their actions and attitudes were no different than the people they opposed. The paradox about peace and rest is that you have to make time for it. You have to engage a process. You have to seize upon them.

Here is a little exercise for our time off this summer.

For a week, take the time to sit back and quietly look at your surroundings and the people in your life. Look, notice. No judgement. No agenda. Just look and appreciate.

For another week, take a step back and listen to the sounds around you. As you slow down and listen, can you begin to appreciate some of the sounds that usually drive you crazy?

Another week, intentionally touch and feel the world around you.

Now make certain you ask permission if permission is required. But notice the different textures, the rough and smooth, the feathery or the fluid. Notice how this feeling makes you feel.

For the fourth week, intentionally smell and taste the world. Savour those vine-ripe tomatoes, the fresh veggies and fruits. Notice what happens to your mouth when you smell a particular pleasing odour. How does your body react when you come upon an unpleasant odour? Can you pick up the scent before a storm? Can you recognize the smell of the earth after a rain?

Application for Today

Seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling.

With each of these exercises something helpful will pop up. Remember them.

They are gifts just for you that bring blessing. And you know, I will be interested in hearing all about them later in August. Amen.