

Sermon by Rev. Lusmarina Campos Garcia
On Mark 6:30-34; 53-56
19 July 2009

Longing was the word that came to my mind when I read the Gospel for today.

Jesus and his friends were longing for quietness, a moment of retreat, time alone, rest. They were tired. They were coming back from a busy mission trip and had not had time even to eat. The disciples had a heavy agenda, just like many of us, and to have a moment to rest was a privilege.

Don't you feel like that sometimes, that resting is a privilege? In our world, with constant high expectations, and relentless competition, we have no time to rest. Those who have a job are most of the times busy with their work. Those who don't have a job are always busy searching for one. The work at home is as demanding as other work. Students have full calendars. Those who work for humanitarian causes are strongly compelled to serve others. We feel the call to commit our lives so deeply that we become negligent about ourselves, our family, our friends. Many times we forget that in order 'to commit our lives' we need to have one.

I hope that we can take time during this summer for resting. And resting is not something reserved for vacation, but it is something to be incorporated in our daily calendars. We have to be intentional about it.

But resting is not just about ceasing activities, doing less, stopping earlier. It is about diving deep within ourselves and finding peace. Some of us don't rest, even when we are by ourselves. In fact, being by ourselves in quietness becomes quite uncomfortable. Our inner voices ask questions the answers of which we don't want to hear. Our thinking process accelerates and our imagination takes us to places we would prefer not to go. Running from ourselves is many times the reason for the busy-ness. We might find no pleasure in what we do, or in our relationships. We might be afraid of getting older, not succeeding in studies, staying alone, being sick, dying, with no courage to face the fears. But finding peace is not possible if we don't face our intimate reasons and desires, if we don't ask crucial questions and don't listen to answers that speak the truth. We have to stop creating mechanisms that prevent us from ourselves. Only then, will we be able to find peace and rest.

Do you feel comfortable being quiet, by yourself? Can you find peace and really rest?

Cecília Meirelles, a Brazilian poet wrote:

"Get rid of the sad vanity of speaking, think completely silent, until the glory of being silent without thinking".

Jesus and his disciples were longing for quietness, but the multitude was longing for healing, healing for their illnesses, their lack of understanding, for being lost. According to the dictionary, longing is "an eager desire often for the unattainable". For the multitude, healing is a possibility not yet given, but they search for it, they beg for it, they long for it. Jesus put aside his time to rest in order to respond to those people's needs. He healed them.

To heal is to turn around a mechanism that is causing destruction whether biological, mental, social, or cultural. The Gospel story speaks of the people as "sheep without a shepherd". They were lost. They didn't know where to go, whom to listen to, what made sense; they were thirsty for new words, they sat down to listen to a new understanding. We are also lost many times, aren't we? We also don't know what to do, where to go, what makes sense, who to listen to, which values we keep, which we reform, how we believe. We also need to be healed from our incapacity to see, to touch new dimensions of life, to caress different horizons. Do our ways of approaching life help us to go further, to have a clearer understanding about ourselves, the world, the other, about God? Do they help us to relate in a deeper way? What will heal us from being lost?

The Gospel speaks also about the healing of the body. Even those who touched the fringe of his cloak, were healed. I imagine that several of us (perhaps many of us) can name people who were healed from their diseases. We can also name people who died from their diseases. And perhaps we can name people who are between; not between healing and death, but between disease and its healing. People whose illness is active, but the body is fighting it. People who have to take good care of themselves so their bodies prevail over their illness. Healing might not have happened yet for some of us, but Jesus and the multitude witness to that possibility. Like them, we are also called to search for it, to beg for it, to long for it.

What do you long for this morning? What healing are you hoping for?

At this moment, we are invited to pray for healing. We don't do this very often in our worship, but this morning we want to open that opportunity. You may come to the altar or along the platform and kneel to pray for healing of body, mind or soul, for yourself or someone you want to pray for. Other members of the community are invited to simply come and stand behind the person praying, to support them in their prayer. That person might put a hand on your shoulder. As a community we need to make sure that no one is left on their own. We have this shared ministry. During this time, pastor will come and offer to anoint your forehead with oil using the sign of the cross. You may stay and pray longer.

While people come the congregation joins their prayer by singing. Also during this time the prayers of intercession for the sick will be read.

We are longing for your healing touch this morning, God. We are longing for that healing which brings us peace with ourselves. We rest in your compassion.

Come.