

**SERMON – NOVEMBER 19, 2000
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH WAUWATOSA**

PEACE BE STILL

TEXT: MARK 4: 35-41

**FOCUS: IN THE STORMS OF LIFE WE NEED TO
TRUST
OBEY
DISENGAGE**

How can we regroup, catch our breath, decompress, get some rest and regain our strength? There's an answer in Church tradition and scripture.

LET US PRAY:

**SPIRIT OF TRUTH, OPEN TO US THE SCRIPTURES
SPEAKING YOUR HOLY WORD
AND MEETING US IN THE LIVING CHRIST. AMEN**

LET ME SET THE STAGE....

YOU'RE SITTING IN YOUR FAMILY ROOM,

ZONNING OUT IN YOUR "COMFY FAVORITE CHAIR,

LOOKING LIKE A "REAL COUCH POTATO"

IT'S LATE AT NIGHT

AND ALL HAVE GONE TO BED IN THE HOUSE.

-----YOU HAVE BEEN ZAPPING THROUGH THE TV CHANNELS

WITH YOUR REMOTE CONTROL....

SUDDENLY YOU STOP ON AN INFOMERCIAL.

IT IS SELLING ONE OF THOSE SUPER DUPER EXERCISE MACHINES.

**WOW JUST LOOK AT THAT TONED, BODY
PERFORMING A RECORD-SHATTERING
NUMBER OF KILLER SIT-UPS.**

YOU ARE MESMERIZED.

YOU ORDER ONE.

EVEN THOUGH YOU ARE SO EXHAUSTED

BY THE DRAINS AND DEMANDS OF YOUR STRESS PACKED,

SUPER-STACKED

WORK AND FAMILY SCHEDULE

THAT YOU CAN HARDLY MOVE,

YOU STILL WANT TO DO MORE.

YOU MAY BE TOO TIRED TO GET UP TO GO TO BED,

BUT YOU ARE CONVINCED THAT WHAT YOU REALLY NEED

IS TO SCHEDULE SOME GOOD EXERCISE TIME

INTO YOUR DAILY REGIME.

WOW --- WHAT A SUDDEN REALITY CHECK...

WE ARE LIVING IN A PARADOXICAL CULTURE,

A CULTURE WHERE OPPOSITE THINGS HAPPEN

AT THE SAME TIME

AND THEY AREN'T CONTRADICTIONARY?

DO ANY OF US REALLY KNOW HOW TO SAY

“ENOUGH” ANY MORE?

****JUST BECAUSE WE ARE HOOKED UP TO THE INTERNET,**

MUST WE CRUISE EVERY SINGLE WEBSITE

THAT MIGHT BE PERTINENT TO OUR WORK?

****JUST BECAUSE WE CAN, --- MUST WE CHECK**

OUR E-MAIL MESSAGES

FIVE TIMES A DAY OVER THE WEEKEND?

*****JUST BECAUSE WE CAN, --- SHOULD WE MELD TOGETHER**

A BUSINESS DINNER AND A FAMILY MEAL OUT?

*****JUST BECAUSE WE CAN --- SHOULD WE**

JAM BACK OUR WEEKEND

--W/FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER

--SATURDAY MORNING DENTAL APPOINTMENTS,

VET VISITS, SOCCORRE GAMES,

--SATURDAY EVENING PLAY, MOVIE,

CHILDREN’S CONCERT OR ATHLETIC EVENT.

---SUNDAY DINNER WITH FRIENDS OR RELATIVES,

AFTERNOON FAMILY MUSEUM VISIT OR ZOO WALK

AND

---SUNDAY EVENING BATTLE WITH THE KIDS TO MAKE SURE
THE HOMEWORK IS DONE

---OR THE “CHURCH” EVENT NEEDS TO BE ATTENDED.....

WHERE AND WHEN DO WE FINALLY DRAW THE LINE

AND DECLARE:

“IT IS TIME FOR A REST”?

“RESTING”

GOES AGAINST OUR GRAIN.

RESTING IS “LAZINESS,” “SLOTH,” “WASTEFUL,”

“NON-PRODUCTIVE,” “IDLENESS.”

IF YOU WANT TO GET AHEAD, -- BE SUCCESSFUL, ---

STAY AFLOAT, -- KEEP YOUR EDGE,

OR REMAIN COMPETITIVE,

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS

“REST,” “TIME OFF,” “VACATION,” “HIATUS” OR “DOWN TIME.”

SOMETIMES THERE ISN’T EVEN ANYTHING KNOWN AS “SLEEP.”

----WEARING OUR SELVES THIN,

-----WEARING OURSELVES OUT,

HAS BECOME A STATUS SYMBOL IN ITSELF.

REST IS NO LONGER SOMETHING WE ASSIGN TO THE “WICKED”
IT’S MUCH, MUCH WORSE.

REST IS FOR WIMPS!!!

OR COULD IT BE

THAT WE ARE ACTUALLY JUST FAR TOO SCARED
TO SLEEP?

AFTER ALL, IT TAKES A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CONFIDENCE
TO JUST CONK OUT.

ASK ANY NEW MOTHER.

YOU CAN’T REALLY RELAX

UNLESS YOU ARE CONVINCED

THAT ULTIMATELY THINGS ARE TAKEN CARE OF,
UNLESS YOU KNOW SOMEBODY ELSE IS WATCHING OUT.

JESUS DEMONSTRATES BOTH CERTAINTY OF SELF

AND SECURITY OF PURPOSE IN TODAY’S GOSPEL TEXT.

***FIRST, JESUS SUDDENLY DECIDES ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME IS OVER.

MARK 4:33 NOTES THAT JESUS ONLY TAUGHT AS LONG

“AS THEY WERE ABLE TO HEAR IT.”

HE KNEW THAT POURING WATER
INTO AN ALREADY OVERFLOWING CUP
DOESN'T REALLY GIVE YOU ANY MORE WATER.

ALONG WITH THIS ABRUPT HALT IN LESSONS,
JESUS DIRECTS HIS DISCIPLES
TO SET OUT FOR A NEW SITE.
IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE OF SCENERY.

BOTH THESE DECISIONS ARE MADE WITH SUPREME ASSURANCE.
JESUS DOESN'T WORRY OVER WHAT HE MAY
BY GOING *"ACROSS TO THE OTHER SIDE"*
OR WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE CROWD
WHEN IT DISCOVERS
HE HAS TRAVELED ON.

THROUGH JESUS' EXAMPLES IN THE PARABLES,
JESUS KNEW HE HAD FED THE CROWD
WITH THE "GOOD NEWS."
HE COULD LEAVE WELL-ASSURED
THAT THEY HAD NOURISHING IMAGES
TO CONTINUE TO CHEW ON FOR SOME TIME TO COME.

JESUS' DECISION TO LEAVE

IS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED

BY THE IMAGE OF A JESUS

SOUND ASLEEP IN THE BOAT.

AT PEACE WITH HIMSELF AND HIS MISSION.

JESUS FALLS ASLEEP IMMEDIATELY...

.AS THE BOAT SETS OUT TO SEA.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU FOUND YOURSELF

STARING AT THE CLOCK AT 2AM?

******AN INTERESTING STATISTICS.....**

DISPITE OUR CULTURAL OUTCRY OF EXHAUSTION,

ANY GIVEN NIGHT IN AMERICA

70 MILLION HARD-CORE INSOMNIACS

WILL BE PACING THEIR FLOORS.

THAT DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO COUNT THOSE OF US

WHO SPEND A NIGHT OR SO EVERY WEEK

--MENTALLY CATCHING UP ON OUR OFFICE WORK,

---CONFRONTING ANNOYING COWORKERS,

--SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF THE

AMERICAN ELECTION PROCESS,

---SECOND-GUESSING THE MOTIVES
BEHIND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR,
---AND FIGURING OUT HOW TO MAKE A MONTH'S SALARY
PAY TWO MONTHS' WORTH OF BILLS.

SOMETIMES FALLING ASLEEP
IS A CHALLENGE WE'RE JUST NOT UP TO.

LOOK AT ALL THE PRODUCTS CONSUMER CULTURE
HAS DEVELOPED TO AID US IN OUR QUEST FOR SLEEP.
THERE ARE SLEEPING PILLS,
HERBAL SLEEP REMEDIES,
SLEEP MUSIC,
WHITE-NOISE MACHINES,
EARPLUGS AND EYESHADES,
ADJUSTABLE BEDS, WATER BEDS, AIR BEDS
ALL DESIGNED TO HELP US SHUT OUT THE WORLD AND
SHUT DOWN OUR MINDS.

ON THE OTHER HAND,
HERE IS JESUS
----HE SETS OUT IN A CREAKY, LEAKY BOAT,

LETTING OTHER PROPLE DRIVE,
----HAPPILY CURLS UP AND IS SOUND ASLEEP
BEFORE THEY'S HARDLY DRIFTED AWAY FROM SHORE.

THERE IS NO SUGGESTION IN HIS ATTITUDE OR BEHAVIOR
THAT HE SHOULD BE DOING ANYTHING ELSE AT THAT TIME.

IT WAS SIMPLY TIME TO SLEEP.

THERE IS AN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN THEOLOGY --
THAT STATES: THIS EFFORTLESS ABILITY TO SLEEP
AND REST

IS INDICATIVE OF JESUS' DIVINITY.

HE CAN RELAX IN THE SURE KNOWLEDGE
THAT THERE IS NO "POWER OR PRINCIPALITY"
THAT CAN ULTIMATELY UNDO HIM.

BUT WHAT GOOD DOES THIS DO US?

WE KNOW WE'RE NOT DIVINE.

--WE LIE AWAKE AT NIGHT TRYING TO DEVISE WAYS
TO DRIVE THE DEMONS FROM OUR DOOR
BECAUSE WE BELIEVE

WE HAVE LEGITIMATE REASON TO FEAR THEM.

IT IS TIME TO RECOVER THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION OF

EMBER DAYS

IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITION,

EMBER DAYS

WERE FASTING/FEASTING DAYS OF PRAYER,

PETITION, AND PENANCE.

MOST LIKELY INTRODUCED AS CELEBRATIONS

INTENDED TO REPLACE PRE-CHRISTIAN

AGRARIAN FESTIVALS.

THERE WERE FOUR EMBER DAYS,

ONE FOR EACH SEASON.

THE NAME “EMBER”

COULD HAVE COME OUT OF A LATIN WORD MEANING

(FOUR SEASONS)

---OR OLD ENGLISH

“YMBREN”

(PERIODIC OR RECURRING).

**AS THE SEASON TURNED,
SO THE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR
PROVIDED THIS PERIOD OF REPLENISHMENT
TO ENABLE OUR SOULS TO “CATCH UP”
WITH THE CALENDAR.**

INITIALLY THERE WERE THREE EMBER DAYS:

1--AT THE BEGINNING OF SUMMER

(CONNECTED WITH THE WHEAT HARVEST);

2--THE END OF THE SUMMER (WINE HARVEST);

3--AND THE WEEK BEFORE THE WINTER SOLSTICE ...

(THE FESTIVAL OF SOWING).

4---THE FOURTH – THAT WHICH IS CELEBRATED

DURING LENT IS A LATER ADDITION,

ADDED SOME TIME DURING THE FIFTH CENTURY.

UNDER GREGORY VII IN 1078,

EMBER DAYS CELEBRATIONSBECAME PERMANENT.

A RYTHME KEPT THEM STRAIGHT:

---MASSES WERE CELEBRATED ON

MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND SATURDAYS

DURING THE WEEKS

FOLLOWING THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT,

----THE WEEK FOLLOWING PENTECOST

AND THE WEEKS OF SEPTEMBER 14 (HOLY CROSS WEEK)

AND DECEMBER 13 (ST LUCY'S DAY)

----OVER TIME, EMBER DAYS IN THE ROMAN TRADITION,

PARTICULARLY THOSE DURING ADVENT,

CAME TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH ORDINATION

AND THE PREPARATION FOR ORDINATION.

THE WORSHIPING COMMUNITY CAME TOGETHER TO SUPPORT

THE MINISTRY OF THOSE SEEKING ORDINATION.

WITH THE WAY MY LIFE HAS BEEN GOING LATELY

AND JUST MY PENTION TO ADD MORE ACTIVITY

TO MY ALREADY PACKED 24 HOURS A DAY.....

I THINK IT IS TIME TO REACH BACK IN ANCIENT HISTORY AND

REINSTITUTE THE TRADITION OF EMBER DAYS.

I WOULD TAKE THIS A STEP FURTHER

INSTITUTE A BLOCK OF

EMBER HOURS.

THESE SPECIAL DAYS OR HOURS

WILL HELP US TO DO THREE THINGS:

**AND THOSE THREE THINGS ARE A PART OF THE GOSPEL
STORY IN MARK FROM THIS MORNING.....**

- 1 TO TRUST,**
- 2 OBEY**
- 3 DISENGAGE.**

******FIRST: TRUST.**

LIKE JESUS SNOOZING IN THE STORM.

THE STORMS OF OUR LIVES WILL CONTINUE TO RAGE....

PROBLEMS OF WORK WILL BE THERE

FAMILY CONCERNS WILL BE THERE

HEALTH ISSUES WILL BE THERE.....

BUT WE MUST LEARN TO TRUST

IN THE POWER OF GOD'S DIVINITY.

IF GOD IS FOR US,

WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?

GOD'S POWER AND AUTHORITY RUN SO DEEP

THAT EVEN GOD CAN SLEEP,

FOR THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN

OPPOSE GOD'S DIVINE RULE.

*****SECOND: OBEY.**

EMBER DAYS AND/OR HOURS...

**REMINDE US THAT OUR ABILITY TO REST
IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO OUR ABILITY
TO BE OBEDIENT CHILDREN OF GOD.**

**GOOD PARENTS KNOW THAT THEIR CHILDREN NEED TO REST
AND SLEEP SO THAT THEY CAN GROW AND BE HEALTHY.**

AS PARENTS WE ENFORCE "BEDTIME."

**WE MAY RITUALIZE THE COMMAND WITH PLEASURABLE
MOMENTS....**

**A BEDTIME STORY, A FAVORITE SONG,
A QUIET SNUGGLING TIME,
A SPECIAL PRAYER**

BUT BEDTIME,

REST TIME,IS STILL AN ORDER!

LIKE WISE, WE AS ADULTS AND CHILDREN OF GOD

NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT RESTING

IS NOT A LAZY WAY OUT!

IT IS A GOD-ORDAINED COMMAND!!!!

**AT THE CONCLUSION OF CREATION, GOD “RESTED,”
AND AS A GIFT TO THE HUMAN BEINGS
GOD INVITED US TO SHARE IN THAT REST!!!!**

**SABBATH-DAY OBSERVATIONS,
[.....AND THAT WORD SABBATH
DOES NOT SPECIFICALLY MEAN SUNDAY.]**

**EMBER DAY CELEBRATIONS,
EMBER HOURS...**

SABBATICALS

TIME WE SPEND IN “TIME OUT”

FROM THE HARRIED LIVES WE LEAD.....

**ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR
COVENANT RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD.**

*****THIRD: DISENGAGE.**

**JESUS KNEW THAT SOMETIMES IT WAS NECESSARY
TO DIS-ENGAGE
SO THAT LATER
WE MIGHT BE FULLY ENGAGED.**

RETURNING TO OUR GOSPEL...VS. 33

“LET US GO ACROSS TO THE OTHER SIDE”

IN ANOTHER TRANSLATION OF TODAY’S TEXT,
JESUS IS QUOTED AS TELLING HIS DISCIPLES
THAT THEY SHOULD NOW

“PASS BY ON THE OTHER SIDE.”

GO PASS MOVE AWAY LEAVE

DISENGAGE

EVER PLAY A GAME OF CARDS...

BRIDGE IS ONE GAME....

I DON’T PLAY IT

BUT THE PHRASE IS USED IN OTHER CARD GAMES.....

WHEN YOU HAVE NOTHING MORE TO OFFER,

NO HIGHER BIDS TO MAKE,

YOU MAY DECLARE... **“I PASS”**

IF EMBER DAY DISENGAGEMENT

OR DIVINELY ORDERED SABBATICALS

ARE A BIT TOO RADICAL

FOR YOUR STRESS-DRIVEN SOUL TO ACCEPT,

THIS WEEK TRY APPLYING JESUS' DIRECTIVE TO

“GO ACROSS.....OR.....PASS BY”

*****WHEN YOU REALLY HAVE BEEN SPENDING**

MANY HOURS AT WORK

AND WHEN YOU FIND MAYBE JUST ONE EVENING

THAT LOOKS LIKE YOU MAYBE ABLE

TO BE HOME

FOR JUST PLAIN QUALITY FAMILY TIME...

WHY NOT SAY “I PASS”

TO THAT LAST MINUTE REQUEST OF YOUR TIME.

*****WHEN YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFULLY**

THROUGH THE YEARS

OFFERING YOUR HOUSE FOR THE

HOLIDAY EVENTS/DINNERS,ETC.

AND YOUR FAMILY IS IN A STRESSED OUT TIME....

WHY NOT AT LEAST ATTEMPT TO SAY “I PASS” THIS YEAR.

******WHEN THE BOSS COMES TO YOU**

AND PILES UPON YOUR WORKLOAD

ANOTHER PROJECT....

MAYBE IT IS TIME TO SEE IF YOU CAN CAREFULLY

AND TACTFULLY SAY “I PASS”(THIS IS A TOUGHY)!!!!

******WHEN YOU FEEL YOU JUST MUST DASH OUT**

AND GET THAT ONE SPECIAL CHRISTMAS GIFT

...HOWEVER YOU’VE BEEN DASHING

AND FEEL TOTALLY ZAPPED OUT.

MAYBE IT IS A TIME TO SAY “I PASS”(AT LEAST TODAY)

AS WE ARE ABOUT TO ENTER THE EXCITING TIME OF

THE THANKSGIVING,

ADVENT

AND THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SEASON....

LOOK BACK TO THE STORY IN MARK THIS MORNING

THE STORMS OF LIFE WILL BE THERE

TRUST “IF GOD IS FOR US WHO WILL BE AGAINST US”?

REST IS ESSENTIAL –

OBEY “TIME OUT IS AN ORDER FROM GOD”

WHEN YOU HAVE NOTHING MORE TO OFFER...

DISENGAGEPASS BY

ISN'T IT TIME YOU TOOK AN EMBER DAY?

PEACE BE STILL