

“COME APART BEFORE YOU COME APART”

Mark 6:31, July 22, 2018

“COME APART BEFORE YOU COME APART,” is the title of the sermon this morning. And while the sermon is hopefully original, the **TITLE OF MY MESSAGE IS ONE THAT I AM BORROWING FROM A FAITHFUL PREACHER OF THE WORD OF GOD WHO LIVED MANY YEARS AGO!**

VANCE HAVNER, now deceased, was a venerable old Baptist preacher, who was born back in **1901 IN A LITTLE COMMUNITY** known as Jugtown, NC, just south of Hickory. He died in 1986 when he was 85 years old.

IN THE 1950’S, BILLY GRAHAM HAD SOME REMARKABLE THINGS TO SAY ABOUT VANCE HAVNER! Billy Graham said, “Vance Havner is quoted more often today by American preachers than any other preacher in the United States. Anyone who ever had the opportunity to hear him preach a sermon never forgot the man and nor his message! With his humorous one-liners, he could simultaneously make people laugh while at the same time piercing their souls!”

Yes, it was back in the 1950’s that Vance Havner preached a sermon on our Gospel lesson today, “Come Apart Before You Come Apart.” And he titled his sermon this way, to a large degree, because he was reading his text out of the old King James Version of the English Bible that so many of us grew up on.

There it does not say as the English Standard Version does, we read a few moments ago, “Come away by yourselves,” but it says instead, “Come apart by yourselves!”

When Vance Havner titled his sermon, **HE HAD IN MIND A COLLOQUIALISM THAT WAS VERY MUCH POPULAR IN HIS DAY.** Some of you can still remember when people used to say: “Oh, no, I am about to come apart at the seams!”

BUT EVEN IF YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD THAT EXPRESSION, I IMAGINE THAT MOST OF US HAVE HAD THE OCCASION OF PUTTING ON SOME TYPE OF CLOTHING that was made old and slightly worn, that when we put on that piece of clothing it came apart at the seams!

Jesus offered this invitation to his disciples because they had just returned home for their first missionary journey! You remember how shortly before this Jesus had sent them out, as we heard last Sunday, two by two. He told them: “Take nothing with you for the journey except a staff--no bag, no bread, no money in your belt!”

Jesus was reminding them that though they would not necessarily be lodging in a five-star hotel, every night, that God the Father would nevertheless provide for them as they trusted in him.

Mark tells us: ***“And they went out and preached that people should repent of their sins. They cast out many demons. They anointed people with oil and healed many who will ill and diseased!”***

Now the disciples have returned from their first missionary journey, so excited about all the things that they had experienced upon that venture, so eager and desirous of sharing their personal experiences with Jesus firsthand.

St. Luke tells us that Jesus was already aware of this of course! St. Luke tells us that with respect to his disciples and the time that they had spent out there in ministry, Jesus said to himself: ***“And I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven!”***

Friends, you and I, to a large degree are able to make a proper assessment of our welfare, when it comes to our being physically hungry and when it comes to our being physically tired!

When we are very hungry, we **may GROW FAINT**. **If you haven't eaten really for quite some time, you may even find yourself suffering from a HEADACHE and your STOMACH STARTS TO GROWL**. And fortunately, for the vast majority of us--food is readily available to us--and we take time for our bodies to become nourished again.

When we are physically tired and exhausted, we can usually diagnose our own condition in this regard too. It's when we have a gigantic trouble, as some people do when they are listening to a sermon, just trying to keep their eyes open! Their eyes keep going shut, and their heads begin to nod. Some people may even begin to snore a little bit here and there.

What's the solution? We need to find an appropriate place to lay down and rest!

But because of our spiritual blindness, and even after we have become Christians, because of our spiritual-short-sightedness, we may not recognize when we are spiritually exhausted, during those times when we really do need to take some time out, to have the LORD God Almighty recharge on spiritual batteries on his Holy Word and Blessed Sacraments; as the Holy Spirit recalls for us our baptism and all that our baptism should mean for us in our daily lives. We need to come again with our heavy hearts and minds and feast once again on the Body and the Blood of our Savior as he imparts the more abundant life he came to bring to us once again!

You know many people think that a whale is a fish, but more properly speaking a whale is a mammal, because whale's do not have gills as fish do, they need to come to the surface of the water quite frequently to take in a deep, large breath of fresh air, before the submerge themselves into the ocean depths once again.

You can't keep driving your car down the road and get anywhere if you never take the time out for an oil change, or even far more frequently take out time to fill your gas tank when it is easy.

You may tell me that I am being a little over simplistic but have you ever thought of the beautiful sanctuary that God in his grace has provided to us as a “filling station,” and as a place where God comes to us to faithfully fill us with the breath of his very life?

When need to think about what we mean when we say throughout the Divine Service: “God forgives you all your sins for Jesus' sake!” We need to think about what we are really saying, when we say: “The Lord be with you, and also with you!” We need to think about what we are really saying and what we are really hearing in the faith that God provides to us, when we say: “Take and eat the body of Christ given for you! Take and drink the blood of Christ shed for you, for the forgiveness of all your sins!”

JESUS IS HEREBY ENCOURAGING HIS DISCIPLES TO ESTABLISH A PATTERN FOR THEMSELVES THAT HE FIRST ESTABLISHED ALREADY AT THE VERY OUTSET OF HIS MINISTRY.

Ever since Pentecost Sunday you and I have been hearing St. Mark tells us about the earliest days of our Lord's ministry. How shortly after his Baptism and his being tempted by Satan, in all such ways as we are, though he never sinned, out there in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights---that he established the headquarters for his ministry in a coastal town along the Sea of Galilee known as Capernaum.

We read how he preached in the synagogue soon after that and how impressed the people were who heard our Lord's sermon! They said, "He preaches as One who had authority, and not as the scribes and the Pharisees!"

It was right in the middle of Jesus' sermon that a man possessed with a demon stands up, and calls out to Jesus: "What have you come to do to us, Jesus of Nazareth! I know who you are--the HOLY ONE OF GOD! Have you come to destroy us?" And Jesus cast that demon out of that man so that he was in his right mind again!

Jesus then goes home with Peter and Andrew to find Peter's mother-in-law in bed, sick with a fever. Jesus heals her. Then later that evening all sorts of people, hundreds of them crowd around that same home--when Jesus responds to their needs--healing them all.

Mark tells us, however, in **MARK 1:35**, "*And in the morning, rising up a great while before daybreak, Jesus went out and departed in a solitary place and there he prayed!*" And this is something we see Jesus doing over, and over again, making time, no matter how busy he was to spend time with his Heavenly Father in prayer. Someone pointed out, back in the 1980's, when being "burned out" was the phrase people used to speak about a person being totally exhausted, that: "A burned out Jesus would never have been able to make his way to the cross!"

We all need to take some personal time for silence and solitude. The Bible certainly encourages us to do this, all throughout its pages--in the Old Testament and the New Testament. "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46)!

The New Testament teaches us that there are three major benefits that may come our way to everyone of us when we take out time to be with the Lord so that the Lord may indeed refresh our souls!

First, God will bless us, more and more, St. Paul teaches us in Romans 12:1-2 with a "discerning" spirit, so that we will be able to know what God's will is with respect to every one of us and our own individual lives; as well as our being able to discern his will for us corporately, as members of Christ's Church.

Second, our prayers will hopefully, become more natural, not quite so hurried. Our prayers become more of an actual conversation that we are having with the Lord, rather than our prayers simply taking on the appearance of a shopping list.

Thirdly, when we come apart from all the demands and responsibilities of our personal lives, to spend time alone with God in worship as we are doing here again this morning, such time for silence and solitude will also hopefully make us much more sensitive to the needs of our people in this world!

As often as St. Paul tells a young pastor named Timothy to work hard in his ministry, saying to him: ***“Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2)***, he also tells Timothy how important it is that he allow God to nourish his own soul and for his own faith to be strengthened.

PAUL SAYS TO TIMOTHY (I TIMOTHY 4:14-16): ***“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers!”***

ST. PAUL KNEW THAT A SHEPHERD WHO IS NOT WELL-FED, WILL UNFORTUNATELY FEED ON THE SHEEP!

OR TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, YOU AND I CAN NEVER GIVE ANYTHING TO ANYONE THAT WE DO NOT FIRST OF ALL HAVE FOR OURSELVES, WHATEVER THAT GIFT CONSISTS OF!

Well anyone who has ever traveled to a distant place in a commercial airliner knows that once the passengers have boarded the plane, and put all of their carryon items into the bin above their seats, or underneath the seat in front of them, that before the plane actually starts to taxi down the runway, that the **FLIGHT ATTENDANT ON DUTY, STANDS UP IN FRONT OF THE PASSENGERS** and using the P.A. System reviews with them all the safety features that are unique to that particular aircraft upon which they will be flying to their destination!

The flight attendant says: ***“In case of emergency, there are four exit doors, two in the front of the plane, and two in the middle of the aircraft. The seat you are sitting on may be used as a flotation device!”*** But invariably, at the end of the flight attendant’s presentation, the flight attendant will then go on to explain to passengers, and I quote: ***“If the cabin suddenly loses its pressure, oxygen masks will automatically drop down from the bin just above each person’s head and you need to put them on!”***

But do you also remember the specifics of those instructions, if you are traveling with a small child? Upon whom do you put the mask on first? Do you first the oxygen mask on the child’s face and then you yours, or vice versa? You first put your own oxygen mask on and then you turn and put the oxygen mask on the face of your child. Why is it this way? Because if you can’t breathe correctly, you are not going to be able to help your child. And isn’t there a powerful correlation for all of us in this fresh realization.

You and I can’t properly minister to others in Jesus’ name unless we allow God time to minister to us first! Susannah Wesley, the wife of John Wesley, instrumental in the founding of the Methodist Church, was blessed with ten children. Nevertheless, she said, that each day, somehow, she would seek out a quiet time to be with the Lord in spite of all the pressing distractions around her.

Her sons, John and Charles, who would grow up to be mighty instruments in the Great Awakening of the 18th century, noted that if their mother could not find a room to retreat to, she would flip her apron over her head and create that interior seclusion where she could focus on speaking to the Lord in prayer and drawing wisdom and strength from Him.

In the gospel of Mark, we see that the disciples did take Jesus’ suggestion. In chapter 6:32, we read: ***“³² They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves!”***

Well, either unfortunately for the disciples or fortunately for their benefactors, their immediate plans were interrupted, but hopefully they could still say with Scarlet O’Hara, played by Olivia Havilland, in the movie **“GONE WITH THE WIND:” TOMORROW IS ANOTHER DAY! AMEN**