

Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today's Gospel starts out as a follow up on the Mark's Gospel we heard on July 4th. The two parts are bookends to the feeding of the 5,000 plus women and children. John the Baptizer's mission comes to an end, so Jesus brought the 12 disciples together and sent them 2 x 2 with authority over unclean spirits ordering them to travel light with no bread no bag or no money. Jesus further instructed them to stay in homes where they were welcome and if people do not want to hear shake off the dust from their sandals. They were given the power to cast out demons and cured the sick anointing them with oil. Now, we hear they re-gather around Jesus, he calls them apostles, instead of disciples. An apostle is one who is sent and is an official agent, and in this case an agent for Christ. Apostle was then name given to them after Jesus' death and resurrection. By sending the apostles out without worldly possessions and relying on others to sustain them their experience reinforces the power of God. Saddened by the death of John you can imagine how excited they are as they as they experience the power the Holy Spirit had given them and were anxious to tell Jesus all they had done and had taught. You can also imagine how weary they must be. They had no leisure time, not even taking time to eat. Jesus takes them by themselves into a boat where they can share and debrief each other but most importantly to rest. As we work for Christ, we experience amazing things, but we can also find ourselves weary and Jesus show how he cares for us and how important it is for us to rest. To be totally honest, you don't want to listen to me about resting. I am not very good at resting. However, to be effective we must take time to replenish, always a work in progress for

me and Mary helps to serve as a constant reminder of this. I have to take time to refresh my mind, body, and spirit. Where we live, we are in the middle of nature and enjoy the muskrats, frogs, ducks, geese, deer, rabbits and turkey from our deck overlooking a canal to the Grand River. We enjoy taking our Pontoon on the river. We go slow, except when the grandkids are with us, and they need speed.

The word pastor means shepherd. it derives from the Latin noun **pastor** which means "shepherd" and is derived from the verb **pascere** which means– "to lead to pasture, set to grazing, cause to eat". That's what sheep do. They are followers and they graze and eat. To make this more palatable my vision as a pastor is to be a servant leader, to serve the "flock" of God's children by teaching, encouraging, and helping others to understand their gifts and to use their gifts together in serving the poor, the hungry, the "other." As your pastor today, I will share and interpret God's words and will feed with my interpretation of God's Word and the food of the body and blood of Christ to strengthen you and keep you in God's grace. I at other times will minister to you and your loved ones during your physical illness, your spiritual life and at times of crisis like death by being physically present. Also, I also am able to preside and be present at joyous occasions like weddings, baptisms, confirmation, etc. For our many volunteers, please consider ways you too can rest and not get burned out.

Here's the thing. Jesus and the disciples/apostles need rest, but Jesus could no longer rest in the small towns or villages. He would get swarmed so he would travel from one side of the lake to the other, but

people recognize him and run faster to arrive before Jesus. Yet, Jesus still goes forward to the crowds on shore, and shows great compassion because he feels they are like sheep without a shepherd, so he teaches them many things. His compassion leads to him feeding thousands with a meager supply of loaves and fishes which we will talk about next week from the book of John.

I know I need a shepherd as I am sure you do also, and I try to go toward the

from the shepherd because this is what sustains me and offers me hope for everyone, including myself. Sundays and Seasons says this story is strange but true. When he was four years old, Shrek the Merino sheep from New Zealand decided he no longer wanted to be sheared every year and thought the best option would be to hide in a cave for six years. Eventually he was found by his shepherds and was shorn, shedding almost sixty pounds of wool. Merino sheep are bred to produce wool continuously, so without regular shearing, Shrek's wool grew and grew, and he had to lug around the extra weight while hiding. He was indeed a sheep without a shepherd. What happens to us when we have no shepherd? Do we tend to be like Shrek and hide away from the shepherd, thinking we know what is best for us but harming ourselves instead? What are the sixty pounds of wool of which we need to be relieved?

Jesus' compassion does not end at feeding the people. When Jesus and the Apostles cross over the Sea of Galilee to the other side, as soon as Jesus got out of the boat and was instantly recognized. The crowd hurried and brought the sick to where Jesus was. They rushed about that

whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was and begged to touch his cloak. The word was out. You didn't need to touch Jesus but just his cloak to be healed since those who touched his cloak would be healed. Jesus final compassion is demonstrated when we died on the cross for us so we may live in peace and harmony through his blood.

We find our lives work as Paul tells in harmony with one another, united in the body of Christ, filled with joy and peace. We ask for peace; we receive God's peace; Christ is our peace. Peace be with you. Amen.