

MEETING GOD IN THE WILDERNESS

Mark 6:30–44

Focus Statement of Sermon: God wants us to rest from constant work and to trust him to do mighty things.

Function Statement of Sermon: To encourage believers to value rest and renewal, and to trust God who can do mighty works despite what they can see.

SCRIPT

Introduction

I have always been an athlete. I have been playing football since I was young. I got into a team when I was 11 years old and have played thousands of minutes ever since. There was a time when I could not play and I got outrageously big. I tried many things to get back in shape but they couldn't help. Then early last year, I was introduced to aerobics. I discovered that I loved it. I threw myself into it and it was awesome. I was moving from training during the week, to events on the weekend, and football matches on Sundays. My routines and schedules were full. Three to four weeks ago, I got sick. Everyone gets sick, so what's the big deal? It wasn't the first time I got sick. But there was something different this time around. For one, I was sicker than I thought I was. Secondly, I treated my sickness like others I have had, which made it worse. Thirdly, I wanted to get back to doing what I loved doing. So, I pushed myself even when I did not have to. I did not listen to what my body was desperately trying to tell me – which is to rest.

Move 1

Resting, eating, and renewal are important aspects of human life.

- The wilderness were important elements of Jesus' ministry.
 - The wilderness was where Jesus retreated to for rest, prayer, and renewal.
 - Jesus spent time in the wilderness to pray (1:35).
 - The wilderness is this place of meeting and being with God.
 - Now Jesus invites his apostles to go there to rest.
- The disciples had come back from doing what Jesus had sent them to do.
 - They were tired and hungry... because working is tiresome.
 - Jesus demonstrates his care for them by telling them to go away.
 - He is inviting them to his own life routines of rest and renewal in the wilderness.
- The routines of followers of Jesus stand in contrast to our culture of constant work and productivity today.
 - Our culture has a way of making resting seem impossible.
 - There's always something to do... and resting seems like it will make the world stop.
 - Our culture defines us with how productive we are.
 - My brief sickness taught me the value of rest.

- That work will continue even when I'm not there.
- That my body is not a machine.
- That resting is also as healthy as physical exercise.
- Those who take time to rest are looked upon as lazy, like Nwoye by his father, Okwonkwo.
- Those who sleep 7-8 hours a night are told they will never get rich because the rich sleep 4 hours a night.
- Jesus goes against that culture and says, "Come to an isolated place with me to rest, eat, and renew."

Jesus invites them to the wilderness because the wilderness was an important place in Israel's history with God.

Move 2

For Israel, the wilderness was the place of meeting God and seeing his mighty works.

- This story brings echoes of the wilderness wanderings of Israel.
 - We are reminded of the story of the manna in Exodus 16.
 - In as much as Jesus called them to the wilderness to rest, they cannot do that because work calls them.
 - Sometimes, there is need to suspend rest for work because that work will display God's great power.
 - The wilderness is also the place of work.
 - John performed his ministry in the wilderness (1:4).
 - The Spirit also sent Jesus into the wilderness after his baptism (1:12).
 - Jesus wants to rest with his disciples, maybe even hear more about the work they had done.
 - A distraction comes, and instead of running away from it, he welcomes it.
 - Jesus must have had Adaptability as a signature theme.
 - People with Adaptability don't only welcome distractions, they actually look forward to it.
 - Sometimes, a distraction is God calling you to see something you would otherwise not see in your normal routine.
- The disciples are not ready to see God working in the midst of abnormality.
 - Their proposal to send the people away makes logical sense.
 - They are not responsible for feeding these people.
 - In fact, where were the people going in the first place?
 - Why didn't they bring their food?
 - Jesus gives them the opportunity to trust God... and they fail.
 - They're thinking according to the economy of the world where money is king.
 - The kingdom economy says Jesus is King and can do everything.
 - The worldly economy is that which Herod is operating under... where feasts are determined by affluence, power, status, and privilege.

- The kingdom economy is determined by God's presence, and feasting happens because God is there.

Jesus invites his disciples to trust and see this different economy that is based on trusting God.

Move 3

As the good shepherd, Jesus sets the table for his people.

- The feast Jesus gives is different from the feast Herod just threw in the previous story.
 - It is hard to miss the contrast of the two feasting stories.
 - Herod throws a party in the fancy halls of his palace.
 - Jesus gives a feast out in the wilderness.
 - Herod invites the rich, powerful, and privileged.
 - Jesus invites the poor, sick, and powerless.
 - Herod's party has no compassion and ends in the murder of an innocent person.
 - Jesus' feast is based on his compassion for the people.
 - Herod's party happens because there is plenty.
 - Jesus' feast happens even though there is little.
- These two stories are not about money or food... but a way of being in the world.
 - The stories force us to look at our parties and feasts and ask, who is present? And who is absent?
 - Do they end in justice or injustice?
 - Are they based on trusting God or trusting ourselves?
 - do they give honour to God or to someone else?
- So, tonight we are invited to Jesus to his table to have a meal.
 - We will eat and talk about the wonderful things Jesus continues to do.
 - We will look at each other and ask who must be invited the next time.
 - We will rest with God right here and enjoy his presence.
 - We will go out and continue to trust him, even when we have little.