

'Come Ye Youselves Apart'

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[0 : 00] In St. Mark chapter 6, we read that verse 31, he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.

For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. This is the Lord's concern, compassion for his own disciples, given that they have been engaged in the commission that he has given to them.

They've been serving him, working for him. If we get the context, we'll just go back briefly to verses 7 to 9. He called unto him the twelve, began to send them forth by two and two, and gave them power over unclean spirits, commanded them they should take nothing for their journeys, save a staff only, no script, no bread, no money in their purse, but be shorn with sandals and not put on two coats.

And then at verse 13, and they went out, verses 12 and 13, I beg your pardon, they went out and preached that men should repent, and they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

And of course, then we read at verse 30, the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. So they'd been engaged in this commission that the Lord had given them, and they had done so with minimal support, wearing sandals, taking nothing but a staff, no script, that means a small sort of bag with which you put necessities into it, but not to take that, no money, not two coats, just the bare necessities, in order to discharge the work the Lord had given them.

[1 : 36] And for however long they were doing this, sent out two by two and so on, with this great power, having this great power nevertheless came with a cost. We see, for example, if we go back to chapter 5, we see that our Lord himself, when he heals people, and if you see the example of the woman with the issue of blood in chapter 5, at verse 30, we see that Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue, that is strength, power, had gone out of him, turned him about in the press and said, who touched my clothes?

And so he felt and sensed the power coming out of him, and if that's the case for our Lord, it will be the case for his disciples. So having healed the sick, having cast out devils, and having done so with a minimal personal support base, then they will have done that faithfully, diligently, but as long as they were sent out for, then gathered themselves back together again to the Lord, and they would have been drained.

They would have been exhausted, in a good positive sense, and perhaps high on what they've been able to achieve, and filled with excitement and delight, but they would have been drained. In the same way as if, say, an athlete or a sportsman has competed successfully in their chosen sport, and they've won the trophy, or they've crossed the line first, they've got the gold medal, but they are exhausted.

It's a great achievement, it's a great victory, but it's exhausting, and the Lord does not say, right, okay, all we work again, he says, well, all right, come apart a little space, let's go and rest for a while, because they're just people coming and going all the time.

[3 : 16] They had no leisure so much as to eat, and they departed into a desert place by ship privately. Now, of course, as we've said in the past, desert place doesn't mean something like the Sahara kind of thing, in that sense, it means a deserted place, a place where there wouldn't be anyone else, where they can have peace, just to recharge their batteries, to draw strength from the Lord, and to rest in heaven.

Now, as our Lord is showing compassion here for his disciples, concern for their well-being, as well as, if we can say it reverently, a sense of gratitude, appreciation, that they have discharged faithfully

the commission that he gave them, for now, he sends out 70 more in due course, and perhaps the 12 amongst them, but for now, they need rest, and the Lord is anxious to provide it for them. Now, as Christ shows such compassion here for the welfare of his disciples, we can see that this desire that they should be neither overworked nor burned out is completely consistent, as one would expect, with the compassion of our Lord from the very beginning.

There's no virtue in burning out prematurely for the Lord. All that means is that we're not stewarding our time or resources or our own abilities that well.

You know, there are hard cases of, whether it's missionaries or ministers or whatever, that they burn really brightly and they're like a firework. It's brilliant and it's fantastic for a short time, but they completely overdo it and fizzle out.

[4 : 51] And that doesn't really help the long-term cause. It is far better simply to be quiet, to be faithful, to be diligent as we are able and to take that which the Lord provides.

And the Lord intends that there should be rest and a sense of peace in him built into the nature and rhythm of life.

And this we see right from the beginning. Our Lord has, from the beginning of creation, provided seasons and places of rest built into the nature and rhythm of life itself and enlarged upon under the New Testament.

You know, if we think of these things, the first one that might surprise you in terms of an opportunity, a season of rest the Lord has given is the night.

The Lord gives the night for rest and for sleep. And indeed, you could say it's one of the very first things he makes before he even creates the Sabbath or man or anything else. We see as God, you know, creates.

[5 : 58] God called the light day, the darkness he called night. This is verse 5 of Genesis chapter 1. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

He creates night and day right there at the beginning. And we find the night intended for this refreshing, this blessing.

Psalm 4, verses 7 and 8, of course, we read, thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace and sleep for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

Now, notice the context. This is going to be a recurring theme of what we're going to look at this evening. How this rest, this refreshing, is in the Lord, not apart from him.

Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that corn and wine increased. Now, in the olden days, they thought, oh, abundance of corn, abundance of wine, we're rich, we've got plenty to enjoy, eat, drink, and be merry.

[7 : 02] More than that is the refreshing, the blessing, the enrichment that the Lord gives. And because he gives it, I can rest in him. I will both lay me down in peace and sleep for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

Now, of course, the other psalm, as many of you will be aware, which speaks explicitly about sleep, is Psalm 127. And if you're always trying to remember, if you are trying to remember these two, how are they to be found?

Remember that they're a distance apart and Psalm 3 is one, two, three. You've got Psalm 4 and you've got Psalm 127. They're one, two, three apart. So it should be nice and easy to remember these two references.

Psalm 127, at verse two, it is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

Why are we to sleep? We are to sleep in the night. The Lord gives the night for sleep. He gives it for rest. And the first such space for rest and for recharging the human batteries where is the night that the Lord gives.

[8 : 12] Now interestingly, as some of you will be aware, no doubt, that the Jewish day of course began at dusk, at evening. Well, and then the morning followed.

So the evening and the morning were the first days. Almost in the sense of the evening comes first, the night comes first, the Lord first has this time of rest, this time of darkness and then the light.

The evening and the morning were the first day. Whilst, of course, as you know, the Jewish Sabbath is at the end of the week. So we've got this kind of, well, different from our understanding of it because the evening comes first, before the morning, the day began at dusk and the Jewish

understanding and of course the Sabbath came at the very end of the week, the very last day of the week.

Now under the Gospel, under the New Testament of course, we understand the day to begin at dawn, the day to begin with the first of the light and likewise our Sabbath, the Christian Sabbath, the Lord's day is the very first day of the week.

So that now instead of it being something that we rest at the end of the day's labours but rather we begin, we begin with the Lord and we begin the new day with the first rays of brightness, as it were.

[9 : 26] It's not the previous understanding was wrong, it is just that it has changed. The Lord has, as it were, moved it on to place his remembrance of his resurrection and the recognition of the victory over death right at the start of the week and to rest thus in him.

There is of course, whether by night or by the Sabbath and we're moving on of course to that next season of rest that the Lord gives which is of course the Sabbath and other creation ordinance the Lord intends for his people and for all creation to be able to rest in.

But we need to recognise also that there is no rest, no peace without the Lord. We would like to think of course we can just rest ourselves, we can just do our own thing but there is no rest, no peace without the Lord.

If we look for example in the book of Proverbs we see in chapter 3 verse 24 when thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid yea thou shalt lie down and thy sleep shall be sweet.

But what's the context of that? Let's get the context by going to verse 21 or verse 20 even rather where it says by his knowledge the Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth by understanding hath he established the heavens by his knowledge the depths are broken up and the clouds dropped down the dew my son let not them depart from thine eyes keep sound wisdom and discretion talking about the Lord his wisdom and knowledge so shall they be life unto thy soul and grace to thy neck then shalt thou walk in thy way safely thy foot shall not stumble and then when thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid yea thou shalt lie down thy sleep shall be sweet be not afraid of sudden fear neither of the desolation of the wicked when it cometh for the Lord shall be thy confidence and shall keep thy foot from being taken the Lord is the protection the Lord is the rest the blessing the sleep if you like to his people but no matter how much we might attempt to rest if we have departed from him if we have forsaken the Lord or turned our backs at him then no amount of attempted rest in the night will be of any use to us

[11 : 55] Deuteronomy 28 verses 66 and 67 thy life shall hang in doubt before thee and thou shalt fear day and night and thou shalt have none assurance of thy life in the morning thou shalt say would God it were even and at even thou shalt say would God it were morning for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see this is part of the cursing that the Lord causes to be pronounced in advance warning his people that if they depart from him this is what they can expect even the night will be fearful to them well we mentioned not only the season of the night for rest but that the Lord has also instituted the Sabbath day that rest which has created a creation ordinance given right at the beginning and of course as that has been largely done away with by the world and of course Christian commentators warned and said well when people start attacking that the next thing will be the next creation ordinance will be marriage that they'll attack and they'll attack them they'll say oh don't be ridiculous of course everybody loves marriage nobody's against that of course what do we find nowadays having swept away the Sabbath now marriage is all but undermined and swept away in our society and day and age these creation ordinances under attack from the unbelieving world but the Sabbath like the night itself is made for man that he might rest in it that he might also that he might be as we say in all reverence that he might be like

God that he might be like God because this is exactly what we read the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made and he that is God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because that in it he had rested from all the work which God created and made man is encouraged and is like commanded to maintain his Sabbath rest in order that he might be like God capital G God desires his children to be like him be ye holy for I the Lord your God am holy and to follow what he teaches to follow his example to rest when he rests to work when he commands and to work to follow where he leads and we are commanded to be like God and notice how the temptation right at the beginning from the serpent was to Eve from then to Adam ye shall be as gods small g plural you'll be up there as a kind of rival or alternative to God you

will be your own gods you will be a separate different kind of God that is not what the Lord intends he does not intend that we should be separate from him rival

God's small g but he intends us to be like God capital G to have the benefits that the Lord gives to have the blessings that the Lord gives to be like him when he commands we go when he stops we stop when he rests we rest because God gives us not only command but also example and he desires that we should be like him and he desires that we should be with him in Hebrews 4 verses 9 and 10 we read there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God for he that is entered into his rest he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from his we are to rest in him because we are to be like him that is God's desire for his children without the Lord of course just as there is no rest in the night there is refreshing or deep or blessing to us without the

Lord the Sabbath without the Lord seems like a burden it seems like a drag and you know the desire is formed like to compound or commit one sin to compound another in Amos this is an ancient problem in Amos chapter 8 verse 4 hear that swallow up the needy even to make the poor of the land to fail say when will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn and the Sabbath that we may set forth wheat making the ephah small and the shepherd great and falsifying the balances by deceit that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes yea and sell the refuse of the wheat they wanted it done away with so they can increase their profits now of course nowadays when so much has been swept away who are those who are having to work all the hours that God sends who are those having to do the double shifts having to take advantage of any double time that might be going it is those who are in low incomes it is the poor it is the socio-economic bottom of the heap or the rich can afford to say oh well we'll go and do this today and we hope it will be open furnace and this facility and that facility but who staffs these facilities those who are in economic need those who have to work those 70s those who can't afford if the opportunity is there not to take the advantage so that which is intended to be a rest for everyone ends up being that which undermines the rest that the poor may be the only chance of rest that they get

God gives this to defend the poor gives this to cause that those who are even at the bottom of the heap your men servants and your maid servants may likewise rest but the Lord desires his people to rest ultimately in him as well as the night as well as the Sabbath another thing of rest the Lord gives us which you might not really think of as a thing of rest but it is really is the Lord's Supper with this remembrance of his death we are to put aside all other thoughts and focus in a sense the fact that we still have our communion seasons is maybe something of a benefit to this because sometimes people say oh can you do this or can you do that no can't do that because it's our communion everything shuts down in that sense or nothing else takes priority because it's the communion now I realise that is fading out of course and it may not be such an advantage for everyone but the fact of the matter is that in the Lord's Supper as we sit at the Lord's table we are reminded that in his death he has done all for us he has done everything we can't be dashing about and equip ourselves for our own salvation and somehow do enough to have pleased the

[18:51] Lord and we hope that at the end of the day we'll have done enough to satisfy God's justice you won't but the Lord has done it all and we sit and we receive the tokens of his broken body his shed blood that it is not only finished but it is sufficient it is enough for all the sins of all his elect in every age it is a reminder that our salvation is of him and his sacrifice is all that we need it is never of us it is all of Christ and we let go all our own feeble human attempts which we know in theory we can't do it and we know that we could never earn God's salvation but we do so often by human nature end up slipping back into that I've got to do this I've got to do that I've got to make sure I do this because I've got to do the righteous thing

I've got to be faithful I've got to be diligent and very quickly it can become I've got to take this box I've got to take that box and we can fall into legalism from time to time because that's our human nature our human nature is to want to do it ourselves it's why man made false religions appeal to fallen man because they give him what he wants these are the boxes you need to tick this is a price you have to pay this is the money you have to give this is the number of times you have to turn up and these are the rituals you have to go through tick these boxes and that's you sorted and that appeals to man that appeals to fallen man because it is going through motions rituals box ticking payment he can understand that he can relate to that but letting go and letting god take control coming apart a little space and letting the lord minister to us that takes something a bit more spiritual it is that which is at odds with our fallen nature but the lord's supper is also a season and a

place of rest another one that might be surprising to us is perhaps the sick bed which none of us would choose of course we want to be healthy rather than sick we want to be active rather than unable to move we want to be busy we want to be doing and even if it's not in terms of a legalistic earning of our own righteousness we want to be useful we want to be able either to help other people or to feel that we're needed or to be active to be doing for ourselves the sick bed can seem like a disaster i can't do this lord i'm far too busy to be sick i've got too much to do i can't be laying in bed from dawn till that's i can't be having other people waiting on me hand and food i've got to do this i've got i've got busyness i've got jobs to do i've got all these things the world can't manage without me it is said that once many years ago when a new minister started in a place in a churchyard and i suppose it must have been in england because it was the old version or whatever that came out with it and said to him you know as you start your your ministry here you know the one thing you're going to guard against is is believing that you're indispensable and of course the young minister thought to himself i want to be as indispensable as i can i want to be busy for my people i want to work and took him out to the graveyard and showed him all the headstones he said this place is filled now with indispensable people who were maybe thought they were indispensable in their day but there they are six feet underground where their mortal remains are and the world keeps turning and the world goes on and it will manage very well without the stamp you if we could somehow see the world or be slotted back into where our place in life was 24 hours or 48 hours after our own funeral yes there would still be evidence of grief amongst our loved ones but what you would find is the world going on very much as it was without us none of us has been dispensable the lord is in supreme charge of all things and the sick bed may be one of the ways that he uses to cause us to come apart the lord may cause such a providence in in fact he often may cause such a providence to become a blessing if it is accepted of him from him in his providence and entered into with him i'll say that

again the lord may often make use or cause such a providence to become a blessing that is the sick bed to become a blessing if it is accepted of him if it is accepted from him in his providence and if it is entered into with him you see when the lord says come ye apart yourselves as he says come ye apart into yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while it's come in all these places and seasons of rest and no doubt others could be cited as well if we could think of other examples it is never go ye yourselves apart from christ but it is always come ye apart with christ and that can be the sick bed or it can be the seasons of the night when we sleep and rest in christ it may be the sabbath day it may be the lord's table it may be any season or place the lord designs and intends for our rest and it may not be about choosing but none of us choose the sick bed and none of us choose some of the things that happen to us but they can be the blessing of the lord if they are received of him and entered into with him everything whether our work or our rest if it is with him will be blessed to us but rest apart from christ has no refreshing no strengthening no benefit you know somebody if we are compelled to be inactive without christ we don't see it as the lord's providence we don't see it as blessing we have everybody else doing stuff for us oh we can't abide it if we don't accept it as being from christ then it becomes lethargy it becomes boredom it becomes frustration it becomes agitation it increases the tension it in fact detracts from our own recovery process if we do not receive and accept it of christ and enter into it with them you see the lord's primary concern although he has a care although he has a concern for the physical well-being of his disciples and of all those under his care he also knows and recognizes that the spiritual and the physical and the mental are all interconnected we are a whole person and part of the word holy doesn't just mean set apart although it is that it also means the setting apart of the whole sacrifice the whole person holy literally means the whole thing that is involved so it is all of us that the lord has a concern for our whole being our physical as with the disciples resting here but also their spiritual well-being too we are going to benefit spiritually from being a part with christ but of course the world and people being as it is you can almost the thing that amazes me here is proof if ever it was needed of the divinity of christ here you know here they are trying to go to get some space get some peace and they go off in the boat and everybody sees them go and they run ahead of them and jesus when he came out that must be came out of the boat presumably so much people and instead you and i would be irritated we would think oh for goodness sake if there is no peace to be had from these wretched people but instead he is moved with compassion because if they have out gone out run all the way around the edge of the sea of galilee when the disciples admitted they must have been taking their time on the boat maybe the the sea going part of the journey that they were taking it easy was part of the rest part of the recuperation maybe christ was busy talking to them or

teaching to them whilst they were on the boat for all you know but by the time they arrived there's a crowd gathered ready to receive them again they want Jesus wherever he goes they've got to have him and he is moved with compassion toward them because they were a sheep not having a shepherd and he began to teach them many things now we see that his compassion is for their spiritual need that's what he has compassion it's not primarily for their physical need not primarily he's not going to try there to heal them or to feed them although he does that later on of course we'll see how that connects in with their spiritual situation as well but we won't deal with that so much tonight but he's not healing this crowd he doesn't it doesn't mention anything about him healing their sick and opening the eyes they're blind but rather he taught them many things now Ezekiel 34 has plenty to say about criticizing the shepherds that are meant to be caring for the people and dot now those who were the spiritual leaders of the day instead of ministering to the people and enabling them to take on the word of God as a joy and a privilege and delight they simply increased the burdens of it and Jesus said they wouldn't lift so much as one of the burdens with their little fingers and then they go to the temple and the Sadducees and the priesthood were simply all about the racket that they could get to make it a money making exercise in the temple and the house of God the house of prayer was turned into a market where were the shepherds they were as sheep without a shepherd people who grasped and glimpsed something of their need being met in Jesus they had to be where he was they had gone long distance to be there and he had compassion on them and he taught them many things and this compassion that is of Christ it's the same compassion that brought him from heaven in the first place you know between the persons of the Trinity we have this but God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life for God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world but the world through him might be saved and again it's Psalm 103 of course verse 13 alike is a father pity of his children so the Lord pity of them that fear him for he knoweth our frame he remembereth that we are dust Jesus has compassion as his father has compassion on the spiritual as well as the physical needs of those under his care because there is nothing so pitiful as one who is without the Lord none so pitiful as those who for all that they may be rich or poor or high or low or whatever if they have not the Lord then what is their situation they're simply ripening for a lost eternity Isaiah tells us there is no peace saith the Lord unto the wicked nobody thinks of themselves as wicked everybody thinks that a good person that's the defining term a good person I do this I do that I do the next thing but if God is all purity holiness goodness and truth then what is that which is wicked it is the opposite of God it is that which is without God it is the absence of God there is no peace saith the Lord to the wicked there is no peace without the Lord Jesus has compassion on these people because he sees their spiritual need and there is nothing so pitiful as to be without the Lord but he has compassion he tells us again chapter 4 verse 15 we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need it is pitiful to be without Christ but Jesus says to his disciples come ye yourselves apart into a desert place a deserted place just me and you so that they can rest a while because that's what the Lord desires that his people should rest a while they were the sheep without a shepherd what do the Psalms tell us the Lord is my shepherd the Lord is the one who ministers to us and although as I've mentioned in the past I make no apology for saying that again I'm not a big fan of modern versions of the Bible but I do think the good news Bible puts this verse one brilliantly the Lord is my shepherd I have everything I need and that just sums it up and what does it say he does he maketh me to lie down going back to the author's version now he maketh me to lie down in green pastures the rest to sleep he leadeth me beside the still waters and what does he do yes he feeds yes he feeds yes he feeds yes he's a good or yes he feeds yes he feeds yes he does he never dies but he restoreth my soul Jesus had compassion on the people because they were a sheep without a shepherd he saw their spiritual need and linked in with the spiritual is the physical he fed the five thousand of them with five loaves and two fishes he took the disciples apart with himself because they were exhausted from living out his commission during his work, during his will.

[33 : 39] When we are seeking to serve the Lord, he is not unmindful of us. When we are living for him, he is not harsh with us. He rather desires to bless us.

He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. And he said unto them, come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest the while.

It is never go ye yourselves apart. It is always come ye apart. Come with Christ. Come with him into the night.

Come with him into the Sabbath. Come with him into the Lord's Supper. Come with him, if need be, into the sick bed. That where Christ is, we shall have rest and refreshment and replenishment of the soul.

If we be scattered on the hillside, a sheep without a shepherd, the Lord is my shepherd. I have everything I need.

[34 : 44] Bless me. let me. All right. All right. Almost there. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye.

Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye. Bye-bye.

Bye-bye. Bye-bye.