

“The Unhurried Life”

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

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July 9, 2023

From the Pulpit

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*Let us pray: O Holy One, we thank you for the gift of
Your Word and for the words that you place on each of our hearts.
And, O dear God, may the words that I have to offer please You and
honor You and glorify Your holy name. In Jesus’ name, we pray, Amen!*

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I want to begin this morning by asking all of **you** a question:

What comes to mind when you think of *multi-tasking*?

What are some examples of multi-tasking from your life?

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- Our family has a neighbor who faithfully walks his dog a few times a day, and he also uses that same time to check his phone. In fact, it often appears as though he’s even texting while he’s holding the leash to walk his dog, Champ! (Our neighbor is apparently very coordinated! I still don’t know how he is able to do both of those things at the same time!)
- I have another acquaintance who has not one or two, but three, computer screens on her desk in her office at home! And she explained that all those screens are necessary now for her telecommuting job.
- How many of you read the newspaper or a book or do the daily crossword puzzle or play Wordle while you are also eating a meal? (I do that quite often!)
- And sometimes, I fold the laundry or wash the dishes – and I’ve even mopped the floor – while ALSO talking to my sister, Julie, on the phone (who lives in Boston).

And so, I ask you:

- Is multi-tasking a good thing – or even a *necessity* these days?
- Or is it something to be avoided?

Now, **multi-tasking** was certainly a buzzword – and became *the* standard – and even an aspiration – during the 1990s and into the 2000s.

And it was believed *then* that if we all became skilled practitioners of *multi-tasking* then, we'd see an increase in the productivity and efficiency in the workplace and in other areas of our lives.

Well, *now*, all these years later, recent studies suggest that that is simply **not** true!

In fact, some studies have shown that multi-tasking actually makes us *less* efficient – causing us to make *more* errors – and retain *less* information – and it has even been found, in *some* studies – to reduce our intelligence by up to **17%!!** (Can you believe that?!)

And so, **now**, *more recently*, we are being advised, instead, to cultivate the intentional practice of what is referred to as *mono-tasking*.

Simply put, **mono-tasking** is the practice of dedicating oneself to a given task – **and** minimizing potential interruptions – until that task is completed.

The more *recent* research – from the National Institutes of Health, the American Psychological Association and various university research studies – have found that our brains, in fact, **are wired** for deep and concentrated thinking – and so it turns out that we really **aren't** created to multi-task very well – especially with **complex** tasks.

In fact, even though we may *believe* that we are multi-tasking, what is actually happening is that our brain stops one job – and then switches to another task without our awareness. And all this of *stopping and re-starting* is actually *less efficient* and *less effective*.

And so, in response to **all** this *more recent* research, there is now **an increasing interest** – and an emphasis on **mono-tasking**.

The research has found that mono-tasking actually has **many** benefits including:

- increasing our creativity and focus;
- it tends to *lengthen* our attention spans;
- it decreases stress;
- it improves our relationships through the ability to connect with others more readily;
- and it also leads to increased feelings of happiness as we *learn to live in the present moment!*

Now, it may be that **mono-tasking** *will* become the new buzzword – and better yet, a practice and a discipline that we all seek to cultivate.

However, while *mono-tasking* may be a relatively new term – and supported by recent research – there is *nothing new* at all about the spiritual practice of **PRESENCE** within the major religions and philosophies!

- In Buddhism, as you may know, *mindfulness* is the *ancient* practice of purposely bringing one's attention to the present moment or task.
- In Islam, *meditation* is practiced through **salah** (or prayer) five times/day and also through fasting.
- In Judaism, *Tefillah* – or *contemplative prayer* – along with **meditation** – cultivates awareness and resilience.
- And in our Christian tradition and in Scripture, we need only look to the example of Jesus to understand that *practicing presence* was a way of life for him which he modeled for his followers **then** – and for all of us today!

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In the book, *An Unhurried Life: Following Jesus' Rhythms of Work and Rest*, the author, Alan Fadling, acknowledges that, early on in his ministry as a campus minister, given all of his roles and responsibilities – and lack of free time – and his overall overscheduled life, he discovered that the pace of his work was **not** healthy for him – nor his relationships – and it also wasn't sustainable!

And so, in response, Fadling registered for his first spiritual retreat – **not** as the leader – but as a participant.

And that intentional and prayerful time away – from his **hurried life** – changed his priorities and his behavior and his outlook and his life – profoundly. Throughout his book, Fadling emphasizes that Jesus is our role model when it comes to living what the author describes as “an unhurried life.”

Time and time again, in Scripture, we find that Jesus **was** intentional in *finding balance* in his earthly ministry by seeking and finding time for rest and renewal.

The best examples of this, of course, was *immediately* **AFTER** Jesus had been baptized in the Jordan River – and **BEFORE** he began his public ministry – when he set out for the wilderness.

And it is clear that that was *absolutely necessary for him* **at that time** – to retreat for forty days and forty nights – in order to find inspiration and refreshment and renewal for his spirit.

And – it was during that time alone *with* God – in the desert – that Jesus prayed and prayed and prayed – and was painfully honest before God.

And then, and only then, was Jesus fully prepared to embark on his Galilean ministry!

We also read that early on in his ministry, that the crowds of people would seek Jesus out – as the news spread about his ability to heal people – and

again, according to Gospel writer of Luke (chapter 5), Jesus would retreat to what was referred to as *lonely places* to pray – and to find strength and renewal for his spirit.

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Our text for today is *challenging* – and the message is hard to even understand and accept!

It begins with Jesus addressing the failure of society as a whole – by comparing the adults to the children of the land – and in Jesus’ words, *whose song is never understood*.

In our Gospel story today, Jesus calls out the fickleness and the faithlessness of the people who continued to fail to understand the message of salvation and restoration and hope – that same message that first had been preached by John the Baptist – and now by Jesus.

However, just a few verses later, there is this shift in the tone and tenor of the message toward the end of this passage – when Jesus then extends a *gracious* invitation – to the people then – and the people today – to find **rest** and **reassurance** and **restoration** and **refreshment** through **relationship** with Jesus!

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In the midst of all our busyness and distractions and being pulled in multiple directions all at once, Jesus’ invitation was – and continues to be – clear.

And so, the invitation – for all of us – today – is to commit and recommit – to become increasingly aware of God’s active and felt presence within our lives and in our every moment of our every day.

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May we all attune our hearts and spirits – and become more present – that we would be able to recognize Jesus’ invitation once again when he says ...

Come, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens. Come.

I will give you rest. Come.

I am gentle and humble in heart. Come.

You will find rest for your souls. Come.

My yoke is easy. Come.

My burden is light. Come.

Come.

Come.

Thanks be to God, amen!

