

Jon Hauerwas – “To Be Needed” – July 22, 2018
Psalm 89:20-21, 24-29 and Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Yesterday, I officiated at the wedding of Mandy Molinaro and Tim Duerler and spoke these famous words, “in sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, as long as you both shall live.” When we attend a wedding, we are reminded of our own commitments. Our own joys and sorrows. Our own peaks and valleys.

In my own marriage, I have experienced many moments of incredible happiness and, at the same time, have become acquainted with sickness and sorrow. Three months into our marriage, Kara and I were riding our bikes together when she suffered a terrible road crash. We were cruising at top speed when she hit a curb, flew over the handle bars, and smashed into a tree. In the days to come, every movement was painful. She was black, blue, and bloodied from head to toe.

It didn't help my feelings any when, as Kara explained to the doctor that she had been in a bike accident, he said, “you mean bike as in motorcycle, right?” It was that bad. There was a time in my first year of marriage when I wondered if my wife would be permanently altered by the crash. There have been a number of trials in these 13 years, most recently when my wife had an emergency appendectomy just three weeks ago. She is still recovering.

And I have also discovered what many of you already know – that life’s challenges are capable of arriving in waves. Last weekend, my youngest child was ill, and needed to be held throughout the night. Then, this weekend, my mother-in-law, who now lives two blocks from us, was taken to the hospital. Five years ago, she suffered a major heart attack. This time, she was admitted with an irregular heartbeat. She is currently scheduled to receive a pacemaker on Monday.

There are times in our lives when we can relate to our second lesson this morning. It reads, “the apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.” Then, “Jesus said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.”

Jesus was remarkably gifted at sensing the needs around him and providing for those needs. He understood that, without enough rest and the time to recharge, we could not be as effective in our service to others. And it wasn’t just Jesus. In the Old Testament, we hear that God created the earth in six days and then did what on the seventh? God rested. Why? Because we, as God’s people, needed permission to do the same.

Next week, I have a week of study leave. I will be reading, wondering, and writing as part of my doctoral studies. Now, as much as ever, Jesus' words are ringing in my ears: "Come away to a deserted place all by yourself and rest a while." Study. Think. Pray. And feel the presence of God. Because the time will soon come when you will be needed once again.

Next Sunday, Sandy Selby will be here with you. We've already crafted the service together. She's addressing the passage immediately following this one – the feeding of the five thousand. And when I view these two passages together, it was almost as if Jesus was saying "rest up now. More is on the way." There are so many ways that we are wanted and needed. By our families. By our church. And by our greater community. Yesterday, when my wife returned from visiting her mother at the hospital, and I was on my way to officiate at the wedding, she sent me a text message about a letter that I had received. It was a jury summons for the week of August 20.

My sermon today is not a complaint. It is actually an affirmation. Because to be wanted is so much better than the alternatives. So much more fulfilling than being ignored or forgotten. To be wanted is an affirmation that we still have something to

give. And as is so often the case in my profession, I am reminded that through our giving, we discover our true purpose in this world.