

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Sep 2nd 2015

For many, summer is a time of travel. The children are out of school. The warm weather in the northern hemisphere makes travel easy. And opportunities for camping, road trips and visiting families abound. Even when summer comes to a close and our travels end, we're often still on the move. We find ourselves busy catching up at work, doing chores and preparing for winter.

Today's reading depicts a Jesus on the move. We see a Jesus who leaves the synagogue, enters the house of Simon, rebukes a fever, lays hands on the sick, cures the multitudes and sets out to preach in other synagogues. He doesn't seem to stop. It exhausts me just reading it!

But Jesus does pause in his ministry. We almost miss Luke's passing mention of how, "at daybreak, Jesus left and went to a deserted place." We can only assume that Jesus went there to pray and rest.

It's so easy to get caught up in the busyness of life. Some things just need to be done if we want to keep our jobs. But many of us find an allure to having a hectic schedule. Checking off activities on our "to-do" list can engender a feeling of pride, especially in societies that value productivity. When our culture values doing over being, then constant activity appeals to us. I know I often fall into this erroneous mindset every academic year, preparing for classes and doing research. I'm tempted to take on more projects, believing that their completion will fulfill me. Only in hindsight do I recognize that additional projects end up stressing me and only God can fulfill me.

Further, perpetual motion can distract us from deeper issues that God may be calling us to explore. Confronted with a choice, I'd rather tackle the clean simplicity of pushing papers than the messy complexity of people's lives. Focusing on such activities can divert our attention from our more difficult personal relationships, especially those that need healing and forgiveness.

Thus, prayer can remind us of why we're busy. Or, more importantly, for whom we're busy. Jesus preached and cured for the glory of God, his Father. Imitating Jesus, we too are called to work for the glory of God. But we can only do this when we take time to pause in our activity and pray with God and for each other. Recalling the words of St. Paul, "We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you."

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