5-10-20 online Faith When You’re Tired Rev. Amy Haines

JN 21:1-14 Easter Season/Mother’s Day

..A four-year-old and a six-year-old presented their Mom with a house plant. They had used their own money and she was thrilled. The older of them said with a sad face, "There was a bouquet that we wanted to give you at the flower shop. It was real pretty, but it was too expensive. It had a ribbon on it that said, 'Rest In Peace,' and we thought it would be just perfect since you are always asking for a little peace so that you can rest."

--Source Unknown. sermonillustrations:com:mother

How many of you could use a little rest today? How many of you are tired today?

Tired of at-home schooling

Tired of juggling work and school and home

Weary of not being able to visit your mothers or grandmothers

Weary of not being able to cuddle grandchildren or great-grandchildren

Tired of only hearing the voices of friends over the phone

Tired of zoom meetings

Exhausted from the tension of going to work as an essential worker

Exhausted from the tension of not knowing when you will return to work

Tired of eating alone

Tired of cooking daily for your family

This year Mother’s Day is not the hallmark holiday so many make it out to be. Yet, in reality, what day is a hallmark holiday? Our lives are often complicated or messy or isolated or exhausting even while they are a blessing of love and laughter and friends and family. And in the midst of whatever is our ordinary life, we are still called to live, to love, to share, to care.

To all mothers, grandmothers, stepmothers, daughters, sisters, and female friends today—

thank you for being you. Thank you for what you share with us, even when you are weary or struggling.

Remember today, that even if nothing goes your way, God still claims you and loves you. And that is enough!

Women and men, elder and youth, we are all God’s beloved this day, even if we are tired or weary for whatever reason. Even in our tiredness, may we relate today to the faith of Peter and the early disciples following Jesus’ resurrection.

These close companions of Jesus had experienced the anguish of seeing their beloved teacher and friend killed in the most gruesome way possible. They had experienced the loss of hope

when his body was laid in a borrowed tomb, and the shock that his ministry came to such an abrupt end. Then they had experienced the mind-boggling news that the dead hadn’t stayed dead. Jesus was alive! Resurrected! Risen from the dead!

Since the tomb was found empty, Jesus had now appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other women in the garden; the disciples behind locked doors; Cleopas and his companion in the breaking of bread; the disciples with Thomas present.

These followers of Jesus were told to gather and pray and prepare. They were assured that God’s peace was with them, and the Holy Spirit would guide them.

Yet, in this in-between time, they still struggled with what to believe, what to feel, what to do.

They struggled with forgiving themselves for abandoning Jesus. They wondered how it was possible that Jesus was alive. They questioned if the kingdom of God would begin now in a new way. They pondered what was going to happen next.

Unlike Jesus’ constant ministry of teaching and healing, of parables and miracles, Jesus was now not presenting himself to people every day. He was not appearing to the religious leaders to prove they were wrong. He was not appearing to the crowds to entice them to follow. He was not even appearing to the disciples on any consistent basis to give them guidance of what was next.

The disciples were still together, praying and waiting. They had returned to Galilee, to what was familiar and comfortable. And there, at times, they became tired of waiting for what was yet to come.

Peter being Peter, whom I imagine always struggled to sit still and be patient, decided to go fishing. Six other disciples joined him.

Have you ever sought out the familiar when you are waiting on what’s next, or when you are trying to figure out a solution to a problem, or when you simply need to get away from all that is aggravating you? Maybe, like Peter, you go fishing or golfing or walking or work in your craft room or hide in a book or a video game.

Peter decided to return to what was familiar, and go fishing. Maybe the hard, physical labor would take his mind off his many questions of what was to come.

We don’t know what went through Peter’s mind that night, or the conversations that occurred on the boat. We do know that after a long night’s work, the disciples had caught nothing.

How frustrating would that have been, to feel like a failure at something they knew so well?

At daybreak, when the fish were least apt to be biting, when they were exhausted from work that was producing nothing, a stranger from the shore cried out and invited them to cast their net to the other side of the boat. Although they were tired, they obeyed.

Wonder of wonders, they caught so many fish that they struggled to haul in their net! Scripture proclaims a specific number—153 large fish. An unbelievable catch!

As their minds registered the abundance of their catch, the disciples’ eyes and hearts were again opened to the stranger on the shore—and recognized he was none other than Jesus, their risen Lord.

Peter, being Peter, jumped out and swam to shore, fully clothed. Soon, the others joined them, having dragged the net full of fish to shore.

That moment had to feel eerily familiar. I have no doubt they recalled an earlier seaside moment, when Jesus walked along the shore and first called them to follow him, to be fishers for people. I have no doubt they recalled an earlier miracle, when Jesus fed a crowd of 5000 plus with only a few fish and loaves of bread. I also have no doubt they still recalled the vivid images of Jesus during that Passover festival, Jesus abandoned, beaten and crucified.

Now, however, Jesus was alive, once more in their presence, inviting them again to break bread together, inviting them again into community with him and with one another.

Along the shore, Jesus had a fire going, with bread and fish ready for breakfast. As he offered the disciples nourishment in the early morning of that new day, Jesus also invited them once again to trust him, and follow him.

Pastor Luke Bouman reminds us:

“Jesus’ loving response to these disciples is worthy of note. Though they abandoned him he will not abandon them. They were faithless. He is faithful. And when he comes to them by the sea for a second time, he calls them again, and in the same way. In John’s narrative, this serves to bring the disciples full circle. John means to undo the disciples’ forsaking of Jesus by having Jesus call them again. They will not return to fishing after all. There is more for them to do.

“But the message for us is also clear. Jesus means to call us again and again to faithful ministry.

No matter how we flee, no matter where we go, Jesus will gently, calmly, persistently, and perhaps in a familiar way, call us back to the mission. … God is renewing his baptismal covenant with us. God’s gracious gift of life is his part of that bargain. Our response to follow our Lord into ministry is ours. Did we think we could escape the call of our baptism by slipping back into our boats whatever they may be? Jesus both knows us better and calls us out our comfort zones.”

-Luke Bouman predigten.uni-goettingen.de 4-25-04

Through his presence, his compassion and his grace, Jesus once again invited his disciples

to trust and follow, to trust and obey.

The disciples were called to trust that Jesus was with them, as their call shifted from followers to leaders. The disciples were called to trust that God was in control, even as their lives felt so out of control at the time. The disciples were called to trust the Holy Spirit, who would empower them for a new phase of ministry.

Today, Jesus remains faithful to us. Just because the church cannot gather in person

does not mean our ministry is over. Rather, we, too, are invited once again to trust and follow, to trust and obey Jesus, as live Jesus’ faithful followers.

We are called to trust that Jesus is with us, as we move from what was to what will be. We are called to trust that God is in control, even though our lives feel out of control at the moment.

We are called to trust the Holy Spirit, who empowers us for a new phase of ministry. The church moving forward will look different than it did pre-COVID, just as the ministry of the disciples looked different post-resurrection.

Yes, we may be tired. Yet may we also be open to faithful living.

May we be open to the possibilities, rather than the limitations, for the current and future church. May we be open to the journey of Christian discipleship, when that journey has a map that has yet to be drawn. May we be open to encountering Jesus in the ordinariness of life.

The disciples didn’t expect to encounter Jesus behind locked doors or beside a fire along the seashore. Yet there he was.

May we find Jesus not only in the words of this sermon, but also in the words of scripture read around our tables. May we find Jesus not only in the bread and cup of communion at this altar,

but also in the sharing of fellowship around our tables. May we find Jesus not only in our communal singing, but in the laughter of a child.

As we see Jesus around us, then may we share Jesus with others. May we share Jesus’ love and forgiveness, Jesus’ encouragement and presence.

Through sharing the stories of the women in our lives who lived by steadfast faith. Through encouraging a friend who misses their family, living and gone before us. Through taking a deep breath when others get on our nerves. Through admitting when we have acted out in frustration or exhaustion.

May we be real with others as Jesus is real with us.

When we are tired and impatient, when we are bored and restless, when we are hopeful and yearning, Jesus is with us. Still loving us. Still calling us to follow. Still inviting us to trust. Still encouraging us. Jesus is with us.

May we journey then with Jesus, through this day, and every day.

Thanks be to God. Let us pray.