

## HOW DO YOU HANDLE INTERRUPTIONS?

Devotional for July 22, 2018 based upon Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56

How do you handle interruptions? I would have to confess that during my early years in ministry I did not handle interruptions well. I had so many meetings that I was attending, so many Bible studies that I was leading, and so much programming that I was coordinating that I did not have time for interruptions. So when someone had a crisis, was facing surgery, or was approaching death, I did not realize that this was a unique opportunity to provide ministry and to bring Christ into their lives. Rather I wondered how I would now be able to also handle this situation, with everything else that I needed to handle.

It was only over time that I learned that I needed to build margin into my life. I needed margin in my financial life, so that I would be ready for unexpected expenses. I needed margin in my emotional life, so that I would be able to handle unexpected crisis. And I needed margin in my schedule, so that I would be able to respond well to the special opportunities for ministry that arise in the daily life of a pastor.

I have always been deeply moved by the way in which Jesus handled interruptions, such as in our Gospel lesson for this coming Sunday. Mark 6 tells us that the disciples had just returned from their first experience at being on mission. They were eager to tell Jesus about everything that they had seen, done, and taught. Jesus said, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." Jesus knew that they needed time away – time alone with Him – to process what they had just experienced. For Mark tells us that they were so busy, that they did not even have time to eat. I know that for me, if I am too busy to eat, I am too busy.

And so they went away by themselves in a boat to a deserted place. But the crowds saw where they were going and got there ahead of them. When Jesus and the disciples arrived at the location where they had hoped to be alone, they saw that the crowds were already there. The crowds were interrupting them and their plans. But rather than being annoyed, Jesus had compassion for them and began to teach them many things. This then also became the occasion for the feeding of the five thousand.

Here Jesus has given us a powerful example of how to view and respond to interruptions. Not as annoyances. Not as a foul up to our personal plans. But as a special opportunity to provide ministry.

How do you view and handle interruptions? May we all be like Jesus in every way, including in the way in which we view and handle interruptions.

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