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## *All the Time We Need*

**By the Rev. Julia Mitchener**



*Walk, please!* Few words say summer to me more than these. Especially in June, when swim season has just begun and school children swap out desks for diving boards and conjugations for cannonballs—especially in June, these words reverberate around pool decks incessantly as parents and lifeguards struggle to keep eager kids from running and slipping on wet pavement.

This year, children aren't the only ones running. Ever since the CDC relaxed its COVID-19 guidelines, there has been a collective rush among Americans to get out and get going. Having had our movement restricted for so long, we are ready to make up for lost time. Funny thing, though—now that we can race off pretty much anywhere we'd like, whenever we'd like, many of us are experiencing a bit of reticence and a sense of overwhelm, even exhaustion.

There are good reasons for this. Some of us discovered during the pandemic that we actually enjoyed having more time on our own, and we're not sure we want to give it up. Plenty of families with children and teens loved not having to spend every weekend chasing around to sporting events, piano recitals, birthday parties, and the like. Surely everyone found it convenient having a ready-made excuse to bail on some commitment we'd been dreading, be it a checkup at the periodontist or a cross country trek to visit relatives who like discussing politics at Thanksgiving. There have been some real benefits to the less frantic, less compulsory lifestyle many, though not all of us (I see you, essential workers), have experienced over the past fifteen months. And so as we embark on the long awaited return to "normalcy," it can be challenging to pace ourselves. Where in our lives do we want—or need—to get back to full speed, and where might we benefit from taking our time?

This year, in our Sunday lectionary, we're reading passages from the Gospel of Mark. Mark is a book known for its sense of urgency. The word "immediately" appears over forty times in its brief fourteen chapters as Jesus leads his disciples at breakneck speed on their mission through Galilee. All this running around, however, is interspersed with Jesus' insistence on taking respites from the relentless demands of the crowds, his calls to the disciples to "come away to a quiet place," his refusal to be rushed when others urge him to hurry past a person or situation they deem unworthy of his attention.

Which makes Mark's Jesus well equipped to help us find our stride. For here is a Jesus who urges us forward, sometimes calls us aside, but never leaves us behind—a Jesus who goes the distance with us, even when the road we travel is long, tiring, and filled with twists and turns. Jesus' patience reminds me of something we say to the children in our Godly Play classrooms at the cathedral whenever they worry that they aren't going to be able to hear the end of a story, finish a piece of artwork, or enjoy eating their "feast" before it's time to go. "We

have all the time we need," we reassure them. *We have all the time we need.* I love this phrase. It makes clear the abundant and expansive nature of life in the Kingdom of God. A life in which we don't need to panic over being late, being last, being lost, being slow, or missing out. A life in which we don't always have to run. A life in which there will be enough hours and enough space for that which is most important.

So let's be gentle with ourselves these days. Let's be gentle with ourselves and one another as we recover our footing. At home, at work, at play, at worship; in our relationships, in our religion, in our recreation—we don't have to race. We have all the time we need.

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