
Youth Sunday Sermon – Marshall Camp

A sermon by Marshall Camp
Youth Sunday – The Sixth Sunday of Easter

For those who I have not yet met, my name is Marshall Camp. I am a senior at Holy Innocents' Episcopal School, and I will be attending the University of Virginia next year. My parents joined this church when there were newly married, and my siblings and I have been raised here. Over the years, I have attended services, participated in children's chapel and godly play, crawled on my hands and knees as a sheep in the Christmas pageant, and served as an acolyte and usher. I have zip lined, white-water rafted, and endured countless youth group road trips with Keith and his questionable DJ skills.

Growing up in this church has truly shaped my life. It has allowed me to grow, both emotionally and spiritually, and the community here has genuinely helped me through every step of my life. In the same way that the church community has guided me, I have been able to use my experiences to serve as a confirmation mentor for 8th graders who are making their own informed decisions about faith. I find serving as a confirmation mentor to be one of my most fulfilling jobs at the church. Being able to support a new group of 8th graders each year as they learn more about their faith and chart their own journey has been profoundly fulfilling and has inspired me to grow in my own faith. Each year, I learn more about myself from those around me.

One of the things that I have learned, but only recently begun to understand, is that the word "no" does not have a place in my vocabulary. When someone asks me to do something, I am going to try to find a way to do it, no matter the personal cost. I often find myself wearing many hats, sometimes too many hats. This spring, I had an especially jam-packed schedule, and in the midst of this chaos, Keith approached me with the opportunity to give a sermon at senior Sunday. While I was incredibly honored, I was also overwhelmed. I was plagued by one word: Busy. Busy with school, busy with friends, busy with faith, just plain, old, busy. Every time I looked at my calendar for the week, the note for "Write the sermon" was consistently swept away in the tsunami of projects, tests, exams, and activities. It not only seemed I was losing out on the opportunity to craft a compelling sermon, but it seemed that I was too busy for God as well. In this morning's Gospel, Jesus says that the world cannot receive the spirit of truth, because it neither sees nor knows him. While the high school to college transition period is pretty exclusive to us seniors, busyness is far from unique. Many of us become so focused on our day to day lives that we lose sight of the LORD. Work deadlines, presentations, sports, and family all pull us in multiple directions. Whether we intend to or not, we become consumed with the tasks at hand, and this tunnel vision causes us to miss out on the reason we are alive another day, able to participate in all of these activities. The noise of our lives drowns out that which gives us this life. We might go days, weeks, months, (years even) neither seeing, nor knowing Him.

The problem with exposing oneself to a fast paced, noise filled life for a long time is that when we try to slow down and experience God working in our lives, we don't know where to look. We as humans are looking for a clear-cut answer. Black or white. A yes or a no. But God's influence in our lives is not a shout, it's a whisper. And, just as your ears ring after a loud noise, the echoes of a busy life can still ring louder than a whisper if we do not know how to listen.

Ferris Bueller says that "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

"Stop". While the word might carry a somewhat negative connotation, the act of pausing and taking a break, is anything but. Jesus references this idea in Mark Chapter 6 Verse 31 when he tells his apostles to "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest". Jesus and his Apostles have just landed on the North

shore of the Sea of Galilee, and the first half of the verse explains that “so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat.” Jesus senses this overload and commands them to take rest while he teaches the crowds. Rested and recharged, the apostles helped facilitate the feeding of five thousand. Every time I have read this story, I have understood the significance of Jesus feeding such a large crowd of people with such a small amount of food; however, it was not until I recently reread this story that I understood the preparation involved. Great works are not just wanton acts, but stem from a solid foundation. One does not just wake up one day and decide they are going to run a marathon, they train. I am not an ultra-athlete by any means, but I know that rest days are just as important as the running itself. And, just as our bodies need to recharge, so too does our spirit.

While church service is an amazing opportunity to rest and reflect each week, God is not contained within these four walls. God can be found everywhere. I myself regularly take the world around me for granted, seeing everything I deem to be “normal” as just plain. But there is marvel in the mundane. From the ants to the elephants, pebbles to mountains, puddles to oceans, the person sitting to your right and to your left, the Lord has hand crafted everything we see.

A couple of weeks ago, I was swamped. I had so many things looming over my head. Instead of bowing out and giving in to the stressors, I chose reprieve. I went down to the riverbank near my house; a place I love to visit, but one at which I had never caught any fish. Every time I went out to the bank and came back empty handed, my confidence in that spot dwindled. On that Tuesday afternoon, I was not as focused on fishing as I was just being away. Away from my schoolwork, my phone, my quickly moving life. Just me, my thoughts, the river, and God. I threw out a streamer I had tied that afternoon, not expecting much but to practice my casts. As soon as it hit the water, I hooked into a beautiful rainbow trout. Wrestling with the water and a defensive fish, my spirits lifted with each foot it got closer to the bank. When I finally landed it, I could not help but think that God was smiling down on me. The fish was not only my personal best, but a symbol that everything was going to be alright.

While I am by no means saying that you should blow off all responsibility and go fishing 24/7, (which would be awesome), we all should stop to sit in silence, talk to God, reflect on the past, and look to the future. These are all important parts of one’s life. When creating the very world we stand on today, God did not stop because He was out of breath. Instead, he took **shabbat**, a purposeful, powerful pause to mark a job well done. **So**, as you go today, go with the courage to stop, the faith to pause, and the peace of knowing that the world will keep spinning while you rest, because you are not the one spinning it.

AMEN.