

An Hour of Peace

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“I know many things worry and trouble you. But you must set your heart on the one thing that matters. That is what Mary has done, and I will not take it from her.” Luke 10:41-42 (First Nations Version)

Does anyone watch the FBI drama series on television or streaming? Well let me tell you when I say inspiration comes from the most unusual places, it's true! On “FBI: Most Wanted”, the drama series, there was an episode where the character Sheryll Barnes was talking with her mom. That conversation was a turning point of her going back to church. You see Sheryll is gay. She has a partner and several children, along with being an FBI agent. Her mom continuously invited her to attend church with her. She knew that her mother's somewhat conservative church, and the church Sheryll grew up in, was not totally on board with her being gay. The conversation continued with her mom trying to convince her that this particular church's view was changing. Finally, Sheryll, out of frustration, asked her mom... “Why do you even go to this church anymore?” Her mom's response was... “It's my hour of peace.”

Peace is a multi-layered thing. For some, peace is simply the lack of a war or conflict in the political sense. For some it is a state of security. For others, they cannot even define it because in their view; they have never seen or felt peace. At the core of its meaning, according to vocabulary.com, the word peace is defined as:

“... a stress-free state of security or calmness that comes when there's no fighting or war, everything coexisting in perfect harmony and freedom”

When I think of this definition, I hone in on the word harmony. Maybe that is because I am a musical person, but for me harmony reflects the idea of “one with”. Isn't that what we are trying to accomplish when we come to church and worship? Become one with God? Be in harmony with God? Be at peace with God? When that happens, everything tends to melt away into the background if only for a time... an hour of peace. This is why Lima Church became a Reconciling Church. This is why we are a church family that loves ALL kinds of families. This is why when attending in-person or online worship; we try to connect to the One Great Spirit that is God. We all need to lay down our burdens for a moment and feel peace and feel safe.

“... He promises peace to His people...” Psalm 85:8 (NIV)

I also find peace in other places too. I find peace in routines. When I have a good routine, I find a sense of peace and harmony. I simply don't have to think so hard. I can lay down my burdens for a while and complete the routine in front of me. For each of us, the routine could be very different.

For my husband Steve, he walks the dog each morning. He gears up the dog, grabs his phone and ear buds, and starts his walk. He then calls and talks with each of our daughters and then his sister. For Steve this is a routine that leads to peace of mind about how his family is doing. This routine puts him in a good state of mind to tackle whatever the day brings.

For me, I find my morning routine helps me get started in a predictable and comfortable way. I have my routine of making coffee, letting the dog into the yard, sitting for a bit, making a second cup of coffee while my breakfast is cooking, etc. I rarely stray from this routine. You see, I am not a morning person. Every ounce of me is fighting to stay asleep when I have to get up early for work. But my routine allows me to gently coax my mind and body to wake up with minimal stress. It might take me longer than the average person, but I get going the best way I can.

I certainly get lost in story-telling in all its forms. For many of my friends, reading is a great time of peace. Whether you are reading to help draw closer to God, like the routine of Lectio Divina that the Confirmation Class taught us last week, or just reading a great novel that transports you to another time and place; that time apart to allow your mind to set down burdens or worries can be healing, refreshing, and comforting.

Another place I find peace is out in nature. There is something about the beach, the mountains, hiking, boating, camping (or in my case glamping) or just sitting somewhere that is beautiful that makes me feel at peace. There is something deep inside us that needs that connection to God's creation wherever we can find it. The sun on our skin, the coolness of an evening around a campfire, or standing in our backyard listening to the birds chattering. That connection allows the stresses and burdens to melt away if only for a moment... An hour of peace.

***"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace."
John 16:33 (NIV)***

On this Sunday, in the United Methodist Church, we celebrate Native American Sunday. As many of you know, I spent about 10 years doing mission work with the Native American tribes of The Fort Peck Indian Reservation in and around

Popular, Montana. There I met Maynard Hawk. What a great story teller he was!

On the first occasion we met, I ended up sitting on the floor near him to listen to what he had to say. Does this sound familiar at all? Mary, Martha, and Jesus? I am certainly a Martha, but on that particular day I had to be a Mary and sit at the feet of the story-teller. I had lessons to learn and honor to be paid to my story teller. I can only imagine the peace that Mary had while listening to her teacher, Jesus. Nothing else in that moment mattered.

Maynard told the stories of his childhood, stories of his father, and stories of his traditions. He told me about lost generations and grandparents raising their grandchildren. He taught me that his people have always been Christians but it just looked different. He shared that he has seen true evil in the world and never to doubt that it exists. I believe he was talking about Vietnam. You see, he was proud to be a veteran of the Vietnam War. But he would not share the story of that part of his life, whatever he saw or experienced there changed him forever. I found out later that he was never truly at peace in his head after Vietnam, which led to intermittent bouts of alcohol abuse and self-destruction.

He did not tell that story... But Maynard shared that true peace comes for him and his people when there is harmony with each other and with creation. A simplicity of life that comes from a deep connection to the Creator and his creation. A deep connection with each other as stories are handed down. He recognized that when all is working correctly the routine of life feels normal, purposeful, and joyful. That's when he felt peace.

"... The Lord blesses his people with peace." Psalm 29:11(NIV)

All of this is great! There are tools that God has gifted us to use to calm ourselves, de-stress ourselves, and rejuvenate ourselves. But speaking for myself, I wonder if I am missing the point? Life is constantly changing. My routines could be disrupted at any moment. Should I be relying on these moments of peace, these tools to momentary peace? Should I be seeking peace in a different way? *My answer is yes and no.* We need moments of peace to soldier on, to conquer another day as our faith grows stronger. We all carry different burdens or stresses that we have to deal with but we all need some relief. For me, faith and peace go hand in hand. When my faith is certain and strong, I feel at peace and confident in what I need to do. As Psalm 4:8 so nicely puts,

"I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord make me lie down in safety."

I need to stay connected to God. I need my church. I need my church family. I need to keep learning techniques, like Lectio Divina, in order to continuously move closer to God. Like Maynard said to with me, continue to share the stories. The stories of the New and Old Testament. The life stories of each other. We need to listen to the stories. We need to tell the stories. We need to be learners. We need to be teachers. For me, I need to keep coming to church either in-person or online. I need an hour of peace to gain the ultimate peace through Christ. After all, we are Easter people... right?

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” Matthew 11:28 (NIV)

An hour of peace. What a gift God gives us. What a legacy of Jesus he left us in the form of his Church and our church family. Constantly work on growing your faith and you will find ultimate peace. Until that day comes... enjoy an hour of peace.

“The Blessing” Music and Words by Cody Carnes
(based on Numbers 6:24-26)

***The Lord bless you
And keep you
Make His face shine upon you
And be gracious to you
The Lord turn His
Face toward you
And give you peace***

Amen.