

I was teaching a parenting class in which we were talking about the need to have some time for yourself. Some time away from your children in the house. As we talked about how to do that, it was suggested that getting away in the bathroom might be a solution. One mother burst out, "Oh that would never work, they walk right in. And if I lock the door they bang on it till I open it." Sometimes it's hard to find a quiet place to rest and renew yourself a little.

Jesus' disciples had returned from a missionary tour. Jesus had sent them out in pairs to teach and heal. When they returned the apostles said what they had done and taught. Then Jesus says to them, "Come away to a deserted spot, (a quiet spot actually) and rest." For there was so much going on, so many people coming and going that they didn't have time to eat.

For Jesus, a quiet spot, a deserted spot, a wilderness spot, was a place where nothing could separate Him from His heavenly Father. He knew it would be a good place for His disciples. There, away from other things, the apostles could share more of what had happened. They could reflect on their ministry and Jesus could shape their experience to make it even more meaningful and useful for what would lie ahead.

In our text today, Jesus' followers are called apostles, not just disciples. A disciple is one who studies under a teacher, who learns from the teacher and who is able to share what the teacher has taught. Mark uses the word apostle in our text and it means one who is sent, a delegate, a messenger, one who has the authority of the one sending them. After teaching his disciples, Jesus sends them out to practice what He is doing. In some ways it is like the third year of seminary when after two years of studying, seminary students finally get to try preaching, teaching, visiting the sick and other ministry tasks. Then the student comes back for a final year to try pulling all these things together.

It seems Jesus was taking his disciples, now apostles to a quiet place to help them realize who they are now. To discuss with them what they had learned and how they saw themselves in this new role. Jesus was doing some supervision with them. As it turns out, the quiet place was quickly filled with crowds of people wanting to hear Jesus and none of them got any rest.

But the idea was good. And we also need a quiet place. A place to get away, to reflect, to take a look at our life, our faith, our relationship with the world and our Lord. Do you have a quiet place or time in your life? Where is it, how often do you go there, what does it do for you? Vacations, days off, quiet time in the morning, jogging, reading, retreats, Bible Camp as Gretchen shared today can all be quiet places. Martin Luther once said that yesterday was so busy he had to pray seven hours. Prayer must have been a quiet time for Luther. Quiet times are times when our subconscious can do some renewing, creating connections between ideas, relaxing our brain and letting new things happen. It

isn't necessarily programmed but the subconscious can do some very creative things in these times.

We are moving into the second stage of our Intentional Interim time here. We are going to be looking at "Who are we?" or what is our identity as a church. I'm asking you to come away to a quiet spot. Maybe it won't actually be so quiet, but it will be a time to come away, reflect, share, imagine and let the Holy Spirit use our conscious and subconscious minds to develop a picture of who we are as First Lutheran Church, a part of the Body of Christ.

We will look at ourselves as disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ. I will ask you to describe what a perfect church looks like in your mind. What are the needs of our church and our community? What tools do we have or need to have to be the church that Jesus wants us to be, to fulfill His mission here? When we see who we are more clearly then we will be able to identify what we need in a senior pastor to help us with that.

As we gather, we will create a place of synergy. Synergy is a Greek word that means "with others, collaborating, increasing energy by sharing our thoughts and ideas." When people get together and start talking about an idea or problem, something greater than the sum of the individuals is often created. As we talk, ideas come forward. So it is important for you to attend one of these sessions. You will see a number of dates in the first two weeks of February to choose from. Please decide on one of them.

Helmut Thielicke, a German Lutheran pastor, said that as we move into action, as we step forward in faith, probably not really seeing where we are going or what is happening, God's Kingdom becomes present and God is able to make God's Kingdom come more fully here on earth. That's what we pray for in the Lord's Prayer.

So as you attend one of these identity sessions, these "Who Are We Now" sessions, God will be able to use you to help God's Kingdom!