

**“Busy, Busy, Busy”**

Rev. Dr. Scott Paczkowski

I think the idea of food trucks is great. I'll bet they are wonderful. I haven't been downtown to check out the trucks yet, but I'm ready and raring. The only thing that worries me about food trucks is that you get the people coming down from the Principal [Financial] building, and this building and that building, and where they might have gone out real fast and actually sat down, now they run out to the food trucks, grab their food, run back to their desks and work while they eat. There are so many people that work through their lunch. They never stop long enough to rest. Teens that are on their way, rush out the door because they were up late the night before, reading, getting their work together, getting their practices in, so that all they have time for is an extra 15 minutes of sleep. In the morning, they only have time for a shower and to grab a bagel and run out the door.

That isn't anything like you guys do, is it? [Speaking to the congregation] Aha! I see that smile.

Parents and children that drive through fast-food because they don't have time for anything, between school being out, work, and getting to Wednesday night here, because it sometimes is even too late to get them here in time for food. Or, what they are doing between soccer practices, lessons and rehearsals and everything else they are doing. They are basically going crazy trying to do it all. Families that can't remember the last time they ate dinner around the table together with the television off.

Now, I'm preaching so, do as I say and not as I do; although it is a whole lot easier when your kids are grown and out of the house. You find the dining room table again once in a while. But I feel for people. We only had one child - and she was a pain. I can't imagine having three or four. Good Lord!

I don't remember the last time I was really caught up. I feel like I have been behind since maybe the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I don't think I'm ever really going to relax even on vacation until the second year of my retirement. I hope even then I can actually slow my brain down. It is so silly. Why can't we [slow down]? As ministers - and I can only speak as a minister, because that is all I have been. I worked at Hardees and I was a minister. Ok.

I read an article not long ago that 10 percent of a congregation is in crisis at any given moment. That means that Ken and I have a responsibility for about 110-140 people every day, and we cannot get to everybody. It frustrates us. I will go into his office and bang on his desk, because you can do that with Ken. He is calm. Ken can't do that to me. I will be bouncing off the walls. It is like spiritual triage sometimes.

I'm sure in whatever you are doing it feels like the same thing: you just bounce from one thing to another. You don't have time. You don't think. You just do. You get through the day and you don't even remember what it was you did. And, I know that I am not alone. Many of you are strung out - adrenalin addicted - just like I am. But, you don't have to feel that guilty, because you aren't alone. We have each other in our problems and Jesus -

thankfully - was in the same boat we are. All he wanted to do was get those Apostles away. He wanted to take them to a different shore, where they could be alone long enough to ask, "How is your ministry going? What did you do? Where are you in all of this?" But they just kept following him.

Hannah was home overnight this weekend, but I had a wedding,. I had phone calls to take, I had things to do. I'm sneaking out of here pretty fast after the service because she is coming back through town with her boyfriend and we are going to sneak out for a Chinese lunch, maybe. It is just crazy. We are all just desperate people flying from one thing to another.

Do you ever feel like everyone else controls your life but you? Because this person calls, your boss calls, your neighbor needs something, your spouse, or your kids, or somebody, and all you are doing is bouncing around like a ball in a pin ball machine, from one thing to the next.

And, there is no time for compassion. I'm all impressed that Jesus took the time to stop and heal all of these people when he was that tired. Sometimes your heart isn't even in it. You don't even feel like it. Maybe Jesus just walked along. I always wondered why just touching the hem of his garment was so important. Maybe because he was just walking along and all they were going to get from him was touching his robe, because he was too tired to lift his arms. But, it worked. So when you are really feeling beat up, maybe it is working even when you don't feel like it.

I swear, 90 percent of parenting is the celebration that your children are still alive today. That can be enough some days. It is the fact that you are still moving forward and doing something. I know most of you who - your children are gone - you're like, "wow, they turned out pretty well in spite of us." That is because most of the time you felt so strung out you don't even remember half of it sometimes. But that is all right. However, somewhere along the line we have to figure out how to move beyond being walking zombies and actually do something to take our lives back, so that we are good for something besides just responding to everyone else's needs. We all know the desperation.

I read an article, after Katrina happened in 2005, about why the government didn't respond quickly enough and why other organizations were taking months to even organize a lot of charitable work. After the fact when they looked back on it, they realized that no one wanted to deal with it. The quote was: "because the desperation was too close." It's one thing to give to El Salvador and another to give to the Congo. It's another thing to give to some far-off place where there are always problems, and we can always accept it. But this was in the United States of America - in the new millennium. It could have been us and we didn't want to face it. That level of desperation we didn't want to look at, so we ignored it and it took so long to care for them.

My brother was in the 1994 flood in Grand Forks, North Dakota. I talked to someone at the wedding reception last night that was also there. This person was in the Air Force, so they were off sandbagging somewhere else, when the water took out their home, and they were left with nothing. That sense of desperation is so overwhelming, that you have nothing left to give anyone else when you have lost everything.

Compassion is hard to come by, and yet Jesus had it enough to stop. He didn't get back in the boat and run away from the crowd. He didn't have a lot to give. I really think he was dragging, but he still gave whatever was left inside of him to at least let them touch him. I think - in that moment - that made Jesus more than just a prophet and allowed them to recognize that he was Divine; because all of the other entire pagan gods were ominous, frightening and removed without compassion. Yet Jesus gave it [compassion] over and over again.

I read this somewhere (I don't speak German, don't claim to speak German, don't know German, so I will blame the author if this is wrong), but in the German language the word "compassion" means "to suffer with." A lot of people confuse compassion with pity. You can pity someone and do it removed or at a distance, but if you have compassion, that is something very different.

Compassion means that you suffer with them; that you are in anguish with them - you hurt with them. Jesus couldn't get back in the boat. He couldn't turn away, because he felt their agony and he couldn't do anything else but be there. That is the great joy. We argue a lot and we are fighting all of the time: Christians with the people of Israel, with the Islamic people. The one thing all three of these monastic religions have in common, besides one God, is compassion.

When we pasteurize our religion - and Jewish people do it, Christians do it and Muslims do it, by extremism - at the heart of our three religions, the one thing we can share and we need to emphasize more is compassion.

Hospitality is a key word within all three religions. So, we need to find the time to carve out the time, figure out how to make it work just a little bit more, so that we have something left to give others.

When I was young and in high school, my grandmother had a summer place so we would stay there in Minnesota. You would sit there on a nice day - in the bottom of the boat - or lie there and look at the sky, and a summer afternoon would go on forever. Remember it? You could almost be bored. Then you get busy with life and days go fast. Then - if you have children and you get to high school with them - the days go really fast. Then they are out of the house, and the days go even faster.

So, do not talk to anyone who is retired, because they will tell you it [time] goes even faster. You will be so scared, you won't even want to face it. The one thing I have never heard a person who is retired say - is that time slowed down. It picks up. It goes. Time is a commodity and we don't treat it with respect. Time is something we need to treat with respect, because it is a more valuable commodity than money, what you do with the time you have.

So we need to plan and organize ourselves in such a way, that we have that little extra moment to be alone - when we need it. We have that little extra time to give back when there is the moment and the opportunity to do it. Schedule your life. Trust in God.

But the one thing I want to make very clear is that God will sustain you when you do not have anything left. In that moment when you are dragging, Jesus knows what you are feeling. When all you have the energy to do is walk like you can't go much further and they are grabbing on your cloak, God will sustain you until tomorrow and give you enough energy to get through tomorrow and the day after that and move you forward. Don't beat yourself up one minute longer because you are not energetic enough, you are not this enough or that enough. You are enough for God.

Ninety percent of life is showing up, and you aren't going to ruin anybody. Your children will thrive in spite of us, and you will make it because God will give you what you need for today, tomorrow and into that fast-paced future. Trust, pray, believe and hold firm to God's promises, now and always. Amen.