

My car needs cleaning. Not so much the outside but the inside. I have been transporting stuff that I haven't figured out where to put and also my golf clubs because then they're there when I need them. Then I dropped a bag of Indian snacks that I was busy snacking on, and all those little yellow bits fell between the seats, And then just the other day I had to pick up a microwave from Best Buy. I thought it would go on the front seat but no, it was much too big, so I had to push all that stuff over to one side and the result is total chaos.

I mention this, not because I want your sympathy, but because it seems to me that there is often a gap in my life between the way it gets lived on the ground and the way it is on a spiritual level, and I see that gap expressed this morning between our second reading and the gospel reading.

In the gospel reading Jesus finds himself, yet again, trying to take some quiet time with his disciples when a great crowd of people approaches, having managed yet again to work out where he is. He doesn't hide behind the nearest rock though he probably wanted to, no, he starts thinking about how he's going to provide lunch for everyone. Since we're now in John's gospel, he doesn't have to think about it for more than a heartbeat – he already knows what he's going to do – he's just waiting for the disciples to catch up.

And that leads us into the story of the feeding of the five thousand. One of the most important miracles, or as the gospel of John has it, signs of Jesus' divine anointing. It is the only miracle that appears in all four gospels. I will come back to it.

So after everyone has been fed, they are so excited they want to make Jesus king which isn't a role he's ready to take on, so he returns to the mountain by himself. The disciples head home only to get caught in a really bad storm. Jesus walks across the water to join them, and they find themselves safely on the far shore.

It was a busy day by the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus did get a break between miracles. But otherwise he was on and available all day. Just like many of us are. Even those of you who are retired, I know you get to the end of the day and wonder where the time went. Life in our day and age is complex and demanding. Fortunately, we don't have to feed 5000 people and calm a storm most days, but it can feel like it.

Now compare that with the reading from Ephesians.

I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Totally different rhythm, right? Let's just take a deep breath and let that in.

.. that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and

to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

None of the hustle-bustle of Jesus' life, or our lives on the ground, but a beautiful inspiring, uplifting knowing of God's love filling us with all the fullness of God.

And my question this morning is how do we integrate the two? And until we do, how do we live with the God gap – the distance between the rush of life and the bigger picture of who God is and who we are in the reign of God?

I suspect that Jesus' personal hike up the mountain had a lot to do with how he managed to bring heaven to earth and earth to heaven. Maybe all he did was take a long nap which is how he missed the boat home, but I suspect that he also used that time to reconnect with the love of God and to become aware once again of how he was truly filled with all the fullness of God.

We are told by the ancients that when God created the cosmos, on the seventh day, God rested. God rested from all that activity. And God blessed the seventh day because it was her day of rest. And here, in this gospel, we see God in Jesus resting from all the activity of the day.

Resting.

It is a natural rhythm - it is more than a natural rhythm, it is a God-given rhythm. It is why clergy are given the privilege of a sabbatical every five to seven years. Because God rested. And God blessed rest. Jesus rested after feeding and no doubt healing and talking with about 5000 people.

When we are on the fast track it is hard to allow ourselves to rest. We need to be up and doing. We feel guilty about the things left undone. So often we fill our rest time with things that we think need to be

done – washing clothes, cleaning the car, paying bills – or else we zone out with computer games, sports, or television shows.

I suspect that entertainment is different from God's concept of rest. I think God's rest is more like a hammock in the sun – allowing ourselves to remember – allowing ourselves to bask in the reality of God's unconditional love -allowing ourselves to sink into the presence of something so much bigger than ourselves. Allowing ourselves to be fed by that love. Allowing ourselves to hear those precious words, "It is I; do not be afraid."

It can be difficult to do that. Our minds are so busy. Which is why a practice of meditation or centering prayer is so valuable because it gradually teaches us that our thoughts are not that important. Not as important as God's love. And as we find that our thoughts are not so important we realize that much of our busy-ness is not as important as we thought.

When we allow ourselves to stop, when we allow ourselves to be fed by God's love we have so much more energy and focus when we see the hungry crowd heading on our direction. Fortunately, God has no problem with the hungry crowd. There is food to go round and some left over. Today's reading sets the stage for the next four weeks when we will be hearing about how God in Jesus is our food. A reality which we symbolize every week as we gather to receive the Body of Christ and as the prayer says, to be turned into him; bone of Christ's bone, flesh of Christ's flesh, loving and caring in the world.

So next time you have a day when you have to feed 5000 and walk through a storm, remember who you are. You are the beloved of God. And then rest, rest in your inner hammock and be strengthened in your inner being with power through the Spirit, remembering that Christ dwells in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

Amen