

THE WAY OF LOVE

The Rev. Mark Wilkinson, Rector
St. Aidan's Episcopal Church
Virginia Beach VA 23452

Last week I spoke about some of the types of resolutions and activities that the deputation from our diocese and I experienced at General Convention. I said at the end of that sermon that I would pick up on a different theme this week. As I looked ahead last week at this week's lessons I realized that part of Bishop Curry's sermon at the opening Eucharist fit very nicely with today's gospel from Mark.

We pick up exactly where we left off in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus has healed Jairus' daughter and we have heard the story of Herod's decision to execute John the Baptist. What we may have forgotten is that in the midst of all of these stories, Jesus has sent his disciples off two by two to preach, heal and teach. This week they have returned and are telling him all that they have done. They are excited by their success.

Mark tells us that Jesus takes them to a deserted place by themselves to rest for a while. "For many were coming and going and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves." Now today's gospel now makes a jump because the next piece of the story is the feeding of the 5000 but our lectionary holds that for next week. The gospel continues with them then crossing to Gennesaret where they are flooded with people asking to be healed coming from all over.

I was reminded at General Convention of the importance of a balanced life. The reminder came in the opening Eucharist when Bishop Curry spoke of The Way of Love, Practices for a Jesus Centered Life. Of the 7 aspects of this way of life one was rest, Sabbath and that is something we do not do well in our culture. However we have also seen all of the other aspects in what we have read of Mark's Gospel as the disciples study, pray, go, bless and occasionally rest.

I have sometimes spoken of a Rule of Life. Our vestry has a Rule of Life that says how we will live together and work together as a vestry. I have a rule of life that I developed years ago on a CREDO retreat and I revisit it every time I go on retreat. It takes practice and yes we myself included all forget to follow that rule. Bishop Curry's sermon at the opening Eucharist was a good reminder of the importance of that.

As he approached the end of that 34 minute sermon and even though it is long I highly recommend watching it at the General Convention media hub, he spoke of those seven aspects. I have included in your bulletin a graphic so please take that out while I go through this rule of life.¹

¹https://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/documents/wayoflove_brochure_spreads_english.pdf

TURN

Pause, listen, and choose to follow Jesus

As Jesus was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. – Mark 2:14

Like the disciples, we are called by Jesus to follow the Way of Love. With God's help, we can turn from the powers of sin, hatred, fear, injustice, and oppression toward the way of truth, love, hope, justice, and freedom. In turning, we reorient our lives to Jesus Christ, falling in love again, again, and again.

LEARN

Reflect on Scripture each day, especially on Jesus' life and teachings.

"Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them." – John 14:23

By reading and reflecting on Scripture, especially the life and teachings of Jesus, we draw near to God and God's word dwells in us. When we open our minds and hearts to Scripture, we learn to see God's story and God's activity in everyday life.

PRAY

Dwell intentionally with God each day

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." – Luke 11:1

Jesus teaches us to come before God with humble hearts, boldly offering our thanksgivings and concerns to God or simply listening for God's voice in our lives and in the world. Whether in thought, word or deed, individually or corporately, when we pray we invite and dwell in God's loving presence.

WORSHIP

Gather in community weekly to thank, praise, and dwell with God

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. – Luke 24:30-31a

When we worship, we gather with others before God. We hear the Good News of Jesus Christ, give thanks, confess, and offer the brokenness of the world to God. As we break bread, our eyes are opened to the presence of Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are made one body, the body of Christ sent forth to live the Way of **Love**.

BLESS: Share faith and unselfishly give and serve. Freely you have received; freely give. – Matthew 10:8

Jesus called his disciples to give, forgive, teach, and heal in his name. We are empowered by the Spirit to bless everyone we meet, practicing generosity and compassion, and proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ with hopeful words and selfless actions. We can share our stories of blessing and invite others to the Way of Love.

GO: Cross boundaries, listen deeply and live like Jesus

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." – John 20:21

As Jesus went to the highways and byways, he sends us beyond our circles and comfort, to witness to the love, justice, and truth of God with our lips and with our lives. We go to listen with humility and to join God in healing a hurting world. We go to become Beloved Community, a people reconciled in love with God and one another.

REST: Receive the gift of God's grace, peace, and restoration

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. – John 14:27

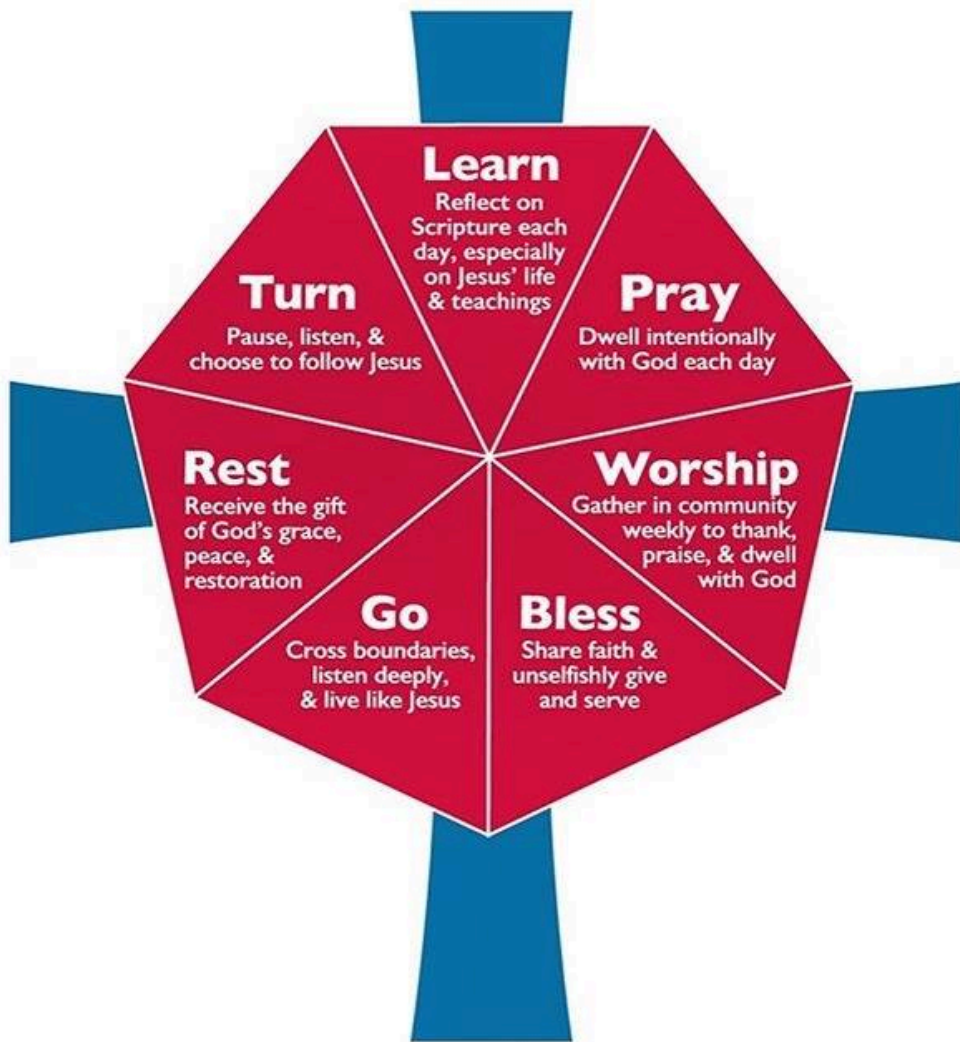
From the beginning of creation, God has established the sacred pattern of going and returning, labor and rest. Especially today, God invites us to dedicate time for restoration and wholeness - within our bodies, minds, and souls, and within our communities and institutions. By resting we place our trust in God, the primary actor who brings all things to their fullness.

FOR DISCERNMENT AND REFLECTION

You, your ministry group or church or organization might begin by reflecting on the questions:

- What are the ways God is calling me to regularly engage in this practice?
- How could – or how do – I incorporate this practice into my life regularly?
- With whom do I need to journey in order to keep a commitment to this practice?

Please take home the insert from your bulletin and put it somewhere where you can spend some time reflecting on these ideas and the questions. A copy of this sermon is already posted on the website so you can read it. Here is the link to the National Church's website. <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love/invitation> This may be the most important thing to come out of General Convention. This rule of life is the way to follow and live a life dedicated to and centered on Christ and that is what it means to be a Christian. If we don't embrace Jesus in our private lives, we cannot proclaim his message in our public life. Embracing Jesus in our private lives is what our Presiding Bishop is asking us to do. So I urge you to take this bulletin home today, put the insert on your mirror or somewhere in the house where you will see it and pray that God will open your mind and heart to follow the Way of Love.



THE WAY OF LOVE
Practices for Jesus-Centered Life