

REFUELING FOR THE JOURNEY Mark 14:32-40

Have you ever been on a long road trip, maybe driving to Florida or some other place for your vacation? And did you find yourself driving just a little longer than you know you should have? I know I have. After a while you start making some bad choices on the road because your eyes are tired, or maybe your reflexes aren't 100 percent. This is exactly why many long haul truckers are limited to the number of hours they can drive by the FTC(?) Or have you ever been on a long business trip, for say 5 or 6 days, living in a hotel room. You're getting tired of the business during the days and the horrible bed at night. You're tired and you start looking for some fun or some entertainment. So you decide to go down to the bar, or out to a nightclub or something. Maybe you dial up one of the PPV movies you know you shouldn't be watching in your room.

You see, when we get tired on our journeys, when we're the weakest, we open ourselves to TEMPTATION. And when we're in that frame of mind, we make bad choices or do things that might bring us temporary pleasure, but might also have devastating consequences. The question then becomes: ***How can we stay on the right path when we're tired, distracted, or discouraged?*** That's what I want to talk about today—getting REFUELED for our journey so that we don't fall into temptation!

Today's gospel lesson takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mt. of Olives. This is the night that Jesus is arrested, tried, convicted, and eventually crucified on the cross. It's the last few hours of his life on earth. He's with his disciples. They've shared the Lord's Supper, and now they've come to this quiet place to rest and pray. He tells them to stay behind, but he tells Peter, James, and John to come a little further with him. He wants them close, his "inner circle" to be with him during the next few hours. He wants his friends to be with him, even though they'll be the ones to desert him and deny him.

Jesus is deeply distraught. He's agitated and in agony over what's about to happen to him. He knows that his betrayer, Judas, will be along any moment with the guards to take him away. He's in such anguish that he just needs some time alone with his heavenly Father. So he tells P, J, J to watch and pray; to stay awake, even though it's probably by this time 1 or 2 am in the morning. Jesus goes off a little farther and prays his heart out to God. He asks God to please take this cup away from him that he's about to drink from. INW, he doesn't want to die! There must be another way! He cries out to his "daddy" (abba) , "You can get me out of this! All things are possible with you. Take this cup away! But please, not what I want, what do you want?"

Jesus could have run. He could have gotten on the first boat to wherever he wanted to go. He could have given in to the temptation that was whispering in his ear, *“God doesn’t really want you to die!”* Or, *“Are you really the Son of God?”* or *“Don’t do this! You’re a young man! You have your whole life ahead of you! Don’t do it!”* But Jesus recognizes that voice. It’s the same voice that tempted him in the desert three years earlier, telling him to turn stones to bread to satisfy his hunger; to jump off the pinnacle of the temple so that the angels could catch him, and to be KING OF THE WORLD! The devil was trying to convince him to take the easy way out. But Jesus would have none of it. He knew his destiny.

He goes back to check on his friends, but finds them sound asleep. He wakes them up and asks them to please pray, stay awake! He does this three times, but to no avail. They are tired from the journey, and they let Jesus down...again.

Jesus was facing the most important decision of his life. And what is he doing? Praying. He reverts to what he knows best—to pray to the Father. He submits to God’s will in tears, even tears of blood. And yet, in the end, he puts God’s will ahead of his own. He’s obedient, even unto death!

Today's mile-marker on our "Journey to Hope" is called TEMPTATION. Here's another pot hole, another bump in the road along the way, trying to discourage us, distract us.

Temptation. We all experience it from time to time. There are all kinds of temptations, like those that are fairly harmless, or so we think, like eating that last slice of chocolate cake in the refrig after everyone's gone to bed! Or that temptation to do something when you're away from home you wouldn't do if your spouse were with you. Or do something else destructive.

One thing about temptation—temptation in and of itself is NOT a sin. Even Jesus was tempted, but did not sin. Temptation becomes sin when we act upon the temptation, whatever it is. For example, you may be tempted to cheat on your taxes this year, but unless you put down the wrong numbers, or give the wrong information, you haven't sinned! But you might be tempted to.

You see, God wants us to build up a resistance to temptation—those things that interfere with us reaching our ultimate destination. On this Journey to Hope, people will get tired, frustrated, spiritually, emotionally, and physically wiped out! The journey isn't easy, so we need all the help we can get.

This week I posted another question on Facebook and by email. I asked you the question:

When you are tired or discouraged, be it physically, emotionally, or spiritually, where do you go to get refueled.”

I got some terrific answers back—more than 20 of them! Listen to how some of you get refueled: Crying, calling a friend, thinking positive thoughts, walking, sitting quietly and talking to God; fishing; choosing to have a good day; sleep/rest; drink a beer; eat chocolate cookies; go to the beach with the dogs; take a ride in the car; listen to Christian music, or any music; talk to my wife; visualize Jesus on the cross, then my problems don’t seem so bad; daily devotions, studying God’s Word; PRAYER.

These seem to be great ways to me in how to get refueled, re-energized, and rejuvenated for the journey! But unfortunately, when some people are depleted, hurting deeply, or spiritually bankrupt, they turn to quick-fix remedies instead of healthy, life-giving things. Hurting people succumb to temptations, like extra marital affairs, alcohol, drugs (legal and illegal), excessive work, pornography, and gambling, just to name a few. Sure, these things may make us feel good, for a little while, but they can kill us—physically, relationally, emotionally, and spiritually. None of these things can help us get to our destination, which is HOPE. They can only make the trip more difficult, or impossible.

All of us have “issues.” We all have “stuff” we’re dealing with. Some more serious than others. The question we might ask ourselves today is: If there are so many hurting people out there, in our community and maybe even in our own church, how is the church, THIS church, set up to help them? How can the church come alongside those who suffer from addictions, or some other self destructive behavior? Sure, we have one support group for women. What about hurting men? Sure we have Stephen Ministers, about 5 or 6, but many of them aren’t being utilized to their full potential. These folks should have at least 3 people they work with at a time! What is Bethel doing to be a resource for people battling addictions? I keep a list of resources at my desk for those who ask for it. But why can’t there be more support groups meeting here, like AA, or NA, or GA? Why can’t we host workshops and classes on financial management, marriage enrichment, child or elder abuse? All these types of things are what it means to be a “verb” in our community, but it takes people with a passion for God and compassion for other people to carry them out and get them started. Is God calling you today?

All these things are wonderful ways to be relevant to our community and can make a difference in people’s lives and get them refueled for the journey. But the REAL key to getting refueled is something Jesus did...a lot! PRAYER! Yes, simple prayer. It’s the primary means of grace. It’s the primary means by which we connect

with the Source of our strength; the Source of all love and all hope! Only the One who created the heavens and the earth and us, knows us better than we know ourselves. Only the One who sent his only Son to die for the sins of the world and loves us unconditionally. Jesus prayed to his daddy often, but never like he did that night in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Prayer. I think it's the key to this whole thing. Tell you what, let's pray right now. Pull out your cell phones.

Call someone right now and tell them you're going to pray for them...here! Now! I'll wait!

You've all got cell phone calling plans, right? 500 minutes a month, unlimited minutes, carryover minutes, text messaging, etc. Well God's got the best calling plan of all! You have unlimited minutes, unlimited access, no roaming charges, no state or federal taxes, no surcharges, no dropped calls, never a busy signal, no answering machine, no voice mail, Always on call!

Jesus teaches us today that the key to staying fueled up for the journey, and to be able to resist temptation, is prayer!

Go in peace!