

I'm Not Dead Yet—August 30, 2020
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sh8mNjeuyV4>

This clip is from the movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. I thought I would start the sermon with a little plague humor. But really, this is the scene for the gospel. For the past few weeks we have followed Jesus and his group of misfits through quite a journey. Jesus fed 5,000 after giving a sermon that lasted hours when he was exhausted and just wanted to be alone and pray. Jesus attempts again, but his disciples get stuck on a boat, and he has to help them. Then he tries to get time alone to pray, and his disciples are just so needy and have tons of questions, and Jesus has to get ready for his journey to the cross. But he needs time with God in order to do it (which he doesn't fully ever get - look at his last attempt at the Garden of Gethsemane when Peter chops off the ear of a soldier...) and there is just so much going on. Last week, Jesus took a big chance and chose one of his disciples to take the lead when Jesus' destiny is fulfilled in his death. Jesus told Peter that the future of the movement rests on him, that he is the cornerstone of the movement.

Then not even one passage later, Peter gets cocky. Peter gets full of himself. Peter wants to take the lead when he still has so much to learn. And Jesus is exhausted, and he had enough. So he is not kind - he is flip - and he tells Peter that he is not the leader yet and that Peter better get behind him and follow. And Jesus tells him this by calling him Satan, "Get behind me Satan." Wow, that is harsh. It is almost like Jesus is telling Peter, "I'm not dead yet! You still have a lot to learn." But he says it in a harsh way.

We are no stranger to harshness these days. We are inundated with rudeness, lies, name calling, anger, sadness, fear, exhaustion. Like Jesus we need time off, time that we can never seem to find even though we don't go anywhere anymore. Because it is not physical time we need; it is mental time - time to sit alone with our God. But when we don't get that time to re-center, to put it all on God in prayer, we get ... well, we have very human responses just like Jesus did in this moment of anger and exhaustion when he snapped at Peter and said, "get behind me Satan!"

We have two more months until the election, and we are trying to find a moment of rest in the chaos. I usually do not enjoy preaching during election seasons because as a pastor I try to

preach social justice. I do believe Black Lives Matter and no human is illegal and that we live in a society that is steeped in racism. But somehow this has become political opinion instead of simple compassion for our brothers and sisters who are oppressed and are just crying out to be treated like people with the same hopes and dreams as any of our children. This is not political, but when I say it from the pulpit it is taken to be so. Yet Jesus put all his focus on the oppressed in society. He gave all his love and attention toward it, and he had a sharp tongue for those in power. He knocked over money tables in the temple, for goodness sake. Jesus was not above anger; Jesus was not above exhaustion; Jesus was not above feeling overwhelmed. And my goodness, did I need to be reminded of that today.

But I also needed to be reminded that my body and mind need time to rest. I need to get behind Jesus, not in front of him. I need to pray about the events happening and sit with the emotions and center myself again. And my guess is that many of you need to as well after the awful week we had. Kenosha is practically a suburb of Chicago that is across the border. What I mean is that Kenosha is super close, and many of us have relatives or friends who live near there. Maybe we go to the Renaissance Faire each summer (not this one though) and we know it is near Kenosha. Either way, the current chaos is happening in a small town about an hour from here in a place that only locals knew about, not the entire nation. Guys, we are living in crazy times. We just are. We have different views on how to get through this time. We have different views on politics, but what we don't have different views on is who we walk behind.

Today, I vow to make it a true Sabbath. I will not look at social media or the news. I will find time to be with Jesus, find time to remind myself of who I follow, and center myself on how I am being called to follow him now—not to be in front of him, but follow him. And we need time to center in order to really do it. That way we know that our words and deeds are centered in Jesus. We just don't think it and end up spreading more hurt and hate because we didn't center ourselves.

I found myself being like Peter this past week. Maybe you did too. Maybe this text came up in the lectionary at just the right time to remind us of who we follow and who we belong to.

Amen.