

## **“Dropping In” February 16; Communion Sunday**

### ***Preface:***

Oh, People of God!

It feels impossible for me to do justice with today's passages. Impossible!

If you can, let me start by talking about myself and the task of preaching today. And of course, I'm sharing me so that we might think of ourselves, right? So, judge me or don't judge me, whatever: But do, at least, think about how what I share fits with you. Let's pray, first.

### ***Prayer:***

### ***Adding It Up:***

I was trying to add it up and I think that I've preached five messages just on the passage from Matthew that we read; another on Psalm 119, and another on the Corinthians' bit? So. You know. Plus, after I share a little here, we're going to take Communion together.

All in all, I felt really challenged about how to do all that needed done with this message: understanding

each passage on its own, finding ways to bring them together, doing it succinctly, because we have Communion soon, and connecting these passages to Communion, which was important to me.

And then I had an epiphany...back on January 6th.  
Haha! Get it!? Lame liturgy joke!

No, I realized as I was trying to do all these things at the same time, and feeling a mix of dismay and frustration and pressure, that this is how I feel all the time about everything. I feel like I'm always trying to do more than I can. If my capacity is a 100, my obligations seem to be 130, 140.

### ***A Demanding Life:***

Do you know this feeling? If you don't, then, brilliant, if you do, then you know that I'm not bragging here--"Oh, I'm so busy because I'm so important!"--and I'm not confessing here--"Oh, I don't know how to prioritize!"--I'm just stating reality: As a living person, there is more that I am obligated to attend to in any given moment than I am able to attend to. There is more that I am obligated to attend to in any given moment than I am able to attend to. And the truth is this is, like Boston said about a different thing, "more

than a feeling.” It’s just reality.

There is never enough of me to meet the ways I am obligated in the world. There is never enough of me--my time, my money, my skills, my work, my emotions, and thoughts and prayers and affection--to go around.

And I think that’s true for almost everyone in the room. I hear our prayers, know our schedules and our to-do lists. I don’t think that this situation is different if we’re retired or if we’re children, if we’re financially comfortable or struggling, if we trust God or disregard God.

I think to be alive in our society right now is to have more asked of us than we can ever possibly accomplish. Multiple claims are made on our time and ourselves all at once, all the time.

***Symptoms:***

And if this is some sort of illness--and to call it that is to make a moral claim about it, I know, but I do mostly want to deal with the situation as it is--so to say that this is some sort of illness, something we’ve all caught as a matter of being alive in our society now, some culture-specific disease, then it’s an illness with its

own symptoms.

One is that we never do just one thing. We never do just one thing.

### ***Symptoms: Everything At Once***

We run errands on our lunch break, or work through it. We watch TV and pay our bills. The TV, the Radio, Podcasts are always on, and while we do some other thing we watch or listen. Our phones ping us, and we play games, talk to friends, read the news while we do everything else we do, from going to the bathroom to going to a funeral. We pray and make to-do lists. We drive and make calls.

We do laundry and make dinner while strategizing how to handle our weekend schedule and making sure the kids don't get hurt. We return calls while we write emails and lesson-plan. We read to review, and watch so we can make a hot-take. We schedule doctor's appointments while we're in doctor's waiting rooms, schedule practices and meetings on our way to practices and meetings.

And in the very rare moments we try to do just one

thing, because we are such strangers to doing one thing at a time, we either fall asleep or catalogue the moment in our journals or instagram, because we recognize it's so special--and ruin it in the process.

This is not a personality disorder; it's a society disorder. The world we live in, the world as it is, which is shaped by all sorts of forces that we have very little individual ability to control positions us to always be behind, below, underneath. Our society is one that implicitly, and often explicitly, communicates that if you're not doing at least two things at once, you're failing as a human being. Things are rigged, not for human flourishing, but to drown us all in demands.

So one of the symptoms of this situation in which more is demanded of us than we can possibly give is that we're almost never able to do one thing at a time, and in the rare moments we're able to do just one thing, we're not really equipped for it.

### ***Symptoms: Muddling Work, Rest, & Play***

Another symptom of the metastasizing demands life has of us is that we co-mingle and muddle together the different ways we can spend our time. That is, we mix work and rest and play together, and in turn,

rarely get to experience good work and good rest and good play, however we define good. We steal moments in the middle of these things because we know that we didn't get enough of them at other times. And so we're always jumping categories.

We try to work while we're resting, we try to play while we're working, we try to rest while we're playing--staying up till 3 watching TV and calling it relaxing, but not feeling rested at all because of the sleep we ignored.

We rage against the wrong things when we bemoan how bad people are at paying attention "these days," or how terrible the generation below us, or below them, are at focusing. We rail against the way everyone's on their cell phones, but we forget that this is just a symptom, too, of our society in which more is always demanded of us than we can give. Our phones become one way--not the only way, but a convenient one--in which we sneak play during work--just a few minutes on that level--work during rest--just an email or two in bed--play during rest--just one more funny gif before we roll over.

To hate on the youth and their cell phones is to

disparage the deep reality first of all that it's not just the youth who have them, and secondly, that all that time texting and calling, watching sports and shows, meandering in social media's morass, is the stuff that sustains all our relationships: gives us jokes over lunch, PTA updates, pictures of our grandchildren, and connects us to those who we feel connected to.

If we're going to be connected to other people in the society that we live in, one in which everyone is pressured to do more all the time, at the same time, and to co-mingle their work and their rest and their play, if we're going to be connected to others in this society, then we're going to do the same things, because who wants to be isolated from the world around us?

But because there is so much to do, all the time, whatever it is we're doing, we try to do something else in the middle of it--just for a second, just a moment--because we have to.

***All Descriptive:***

But this is all descriptive. These are two things that we do--we try to do more than one thing at a time, and we mix-up our work and rest and play as we do it--two

things that we do in a society in which we are continually asked to do more and give more and carry more than we are able to do, give, and carry.

***Typically:***

I think a typical message would go on to prescribe to us some way to end this, to get away from it. We'd be called to find a Christian way to resist it. Maybe we'd talk about fasting as an avenue. Maybe we'd talk about how we need to pray more effectively, or attend worship more regularly, or give cash more generously. But it all becomes more, more, more.

And the terrible problem, of course, is that solution itself becomes one more thing that is asked of us, one more burden that we have to attend to. Christianity's stuff becomes one more ask, a demand we certainly prioritize, but always an addition, never a subtraction. Because, again, I don't believe our individual, personal solutions can prevent us from experiencing our inability to manage all that we're asked to manage. I think this is a society problem, one that we must bear under, with only marginal success, if we want to be a part of our society--want to keep our friends, know our neighbors, care for our widows and orphans, support our church, and bless the world. To discern actual ways

to resist this societal burden, much less actualize them in our lives, requires an entire Christian project, an entire revolution with all the commensurate commitment to a new way of life that revolution demands.

### ***Into Communion:***

But it is hard to read and hear passages like today's and invite us to do less. Passages that describe a way of life that is utterly revolutionary, and so destructive to our typical ways of living.

And I can't in good conscious this morning invite us to do more.

And look, I know we'll leave here, and I do hope that things I've shared linger a little bit past this morning. What I hope for us is this, really: That we notice the demands that are placed on us, and we say, simply, "This is wrong." "This is not right." Hear me: It is dehumanizing to be asked, continually, to do more than we are able to do. It's not heroic to rise to that occasion, anymore than it's heroic to pay bills: It's just what we have to do to survive the world we're in. But I do think that with a Spirit-led imagination and a little bit of resolve, each of us can resist this pressure the

world puts on us, while still maintaining those relationships with others and our wide culture that God uses all the time. I won't prescribe how to do that, but I'll ask us to at least wonder if a prescription for this illness would be a good or bad thing.

So let me hit the brakes, here, and simply invite us to do nothing but what we're doing right now, will do in a moment. We can put our phones on do not disturb. We can stop writing our lists, or planning our lunches, or thinking about our chores. We can rouse ourselves if that's what we need, because we did try to do nothing but listen...and are fighting the doze because of it.

And we'll try, during communion, to really commune--come together--as people and with our God.