My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us pray. Lord God of our Hearts, Minds, Spirits, and Souls, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, our strength and our redeemer, Amen.

Jesus and the disciples have had some busy times recently. They’ve been out healing, teaching, casting out demons, feeding the over 5,000 people who have followed them into the wilderness (for those of you who have read the in-between story of today’s split scripture).

The needs of the people are great, endless, and the more that Jesus does with them the more come to be taught, healed, and fed. It’s exhausting, and Jesus needs to go to a quiet place to rest up so that he can keep his ministry going. It’s all been too much, lately, he just needs some sleep.

If those words sound familiar, they should be. They were recently uttered by our President Biden, who said he was exhausted by his schedule recently, and the reason why he could not think clearly is because he needed more sleep. Maybe not take any appointments after 8 pm. The leader of the free world admits that he just cannot do it all anymore; there has to be an end to what is happening and what he can personally be responsible for. For the sake of engagement, he has to withdrawal. And the people panicked.

Because they have needs. Needs that only he can solve? Highly unlikely. But in their need, they project their fear and angst onto him to say that if he can’t do it, he should just step aside and let someone else take over.

It sounds a little like our story here; the needy people will not let Jesus rest, for only he can do what he does. It is HIS cloak that they want to touch; HIS face that they want to see; HIS voice that they want to hear.

But the very human Jesus says enough, let us go rest. No more meetings after 8 pm for the rest of the Gospel.

According to the National Institute for Health, getting enough quality sleep helps you function well throughout the day. People who are sleep deficient are less productive at work and school. They have slower reaction time, take longer to finish both simple and difficult tasks, and make more mistakes.

After several nights of losing sleep — even a loss of just 1 to 2 hours per night — your ability to function suffers as if you haven't slept at all for a day or two.

You might be sleep deficient if you often feel like you could doze off while:

* Sitting and reading or watching TV
* Sitting still in a public place, such as a movie theater, meeting, or classroom
* Riding in a car for an hour without stopping
* Sitting and talking to someone
* Sitting quietly after lunch
* Sitting in traffic for a few minutes

Some people aren't aware of the risks of sleep deficiency. In fact, they may not even realize that they're sleep deficient. Even with limited or poor-quality sleep, they may still think they can function well. But there’s one thing we can all agree on: sleep is not optional. It’s so essential to the human condition that we refer to the other things in life that are essential as “just like eating or sleeping”. That’s how important resting is to our bodies, minds, spirits, and souls.

 So you might be surprised to learn that not only do we hold our leaders we look up to in this impossible standard of not needing rest, but recently the none other than the Supreme Court of the United States decided to impose this standard on the ones to whom Jesus ministered to most often: the poor, the disinherited, the brokenhearted, and the homeless.

 The case decided is the most significant ruling on homelessness in decades as the number of people in the U.S. are without a permanent place to live rises yearly.

 The high court found that outdoor sleeping bans don’t violate the Eighth Amendment against cruel and unusual punishment. Western cities had argued that the ruling made it harder to manage outdoor encampments in public spaces, but homeless advocates said punishing people who need a place to sleep would criminalize homelessness.

In California, home to one-third of the country’s homeless population, the governor said the decision gives state and local officials the authority to clear “unsafe encampments” from the streets while acting with compassion. “This decision removes the legal ambiguities that have tied the hands of local officials for years,” he said.

One of the justices said, “Homelessness is complex. Its causes are many. So may be the public policy responses required to address it. A handful of federal judges cannot begin to ‘match’ the collective wisdom the American people possess in deciding ‘how best to handle’ a pressing social question like homelessness.”

The justice suggested that people who have no choice but to sleep outdoors could raise that as a “necessity defense,” if they are ticketed or otherwise punished for violating a camping ban.

Homeless advocates, on the other hand, have said that allowing cities to punish people who have no other place to sleep would ultimately make the crisis worse. Cities had been allowed to regulate encampments under a U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling but couldn’t completely bar people from sleeping outdoors.

 But another justice wrote, ““Sleep is a biological necessity, not a crime. Homelessness is a reality for so many Americans.” Punishing people for something they can’t control, like homelessness, is cruel and unusual, the justice said, warning that striking down Eighth Amendment arguments against camping bans in public places likely won’t end the fights over the ordinances in court.

 Shelters are not always safe places, either. Many stay away from shelters because they fear discrimination, physical violence, and sexual assault. If you’ve never been to a shelter of any kind and would like to know what they’re like, let me know. I’ll schedule a tour and let’s go and see together whether this is a place you would go to in order to “get some rest”.

The attorney for the lead plaintiff in the case, the city of Grants Pass, Oregon, said of the ruling, “Years from now, I hope that we will look back on today’s watershed ruling as the turning point in America’s homelessness crisis.”

I’ll bet we will. I’ll leave you with these final thoughts.

Rest is a human right. It’s not a negotiation. It is not something to be taken for granted any more than it can be ticketed or arrested.

Let’s remember: the needs are many, the crowds are great, they have no food, they are like a sheep without a shepherd. And so those of us who do have privilege should remember that, just as we take rest for granted and sleep soundly, there are many who cannot.

Not because they don’t want to, but because there is no room at the inn, the rent is too high, they are fleeing under penalty of physical harm to themselves or family.

They are aliens in the land, seeking only that which we take for granted. Why can’t we grant that back in giving? We were aliens in the land, once too, remember?

Let’s sleep on it. And in the morning, say the prayer for the ones who have nowhere to go as Jesus might, and maybe that turning point won’t take years after all.

Thanks be to God, Amen.