

Slow!

3 of 7 "Signs for the Summer" Rev. Michael J. Mattil

A policeman pulled over a car, walked up to the driver's window, and asked the man if he knew why he was pulled over. "No," the man replied. "You failed to stop at the stop sign," the cop explained. "But I did slow down!" the guy argued. The cop shook his head. "You are required to stop. That's why they're called stop signs." The man started to get belligerent. "Stop, slow down -- what's the difference?" The cop pulled out his baton and said, "I can show you. I'm going to start hitting you with my stick. And you tell me if you want me to stop or slow down."

I share that with you today as I continue my series on "Signs for the Summer." I've already talked about Stop (which is different from Slow) and Detour. Today we think about what seeing a sign that says **SLOW** can say to us in our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Video Clip: fast paced action showing how hectic life can be.

Our lives get so busy – we are constantly rushing everywhere we go. And our haste to get from one part of our busyness to the next makes us impatient with those around us, be it the driver in the car ahead of us or the person running the cash register or the waiter who takes too long to bring out your food. Hurry, Hurry, Hurry! Our lives are always speeding up. We pay for our gas at the pump, we have Toll Tags so we don't have to slow down while driving, we get cash at an ATM so we are not slowed down by a teller. We get annoyed when we have to wait in line – I know I do! Cell phones and iPods and PDAS and Laptops and Broadband and the Internet all feed our need for speed. Hurry up! We've got to keep going.

Sometimes I think we can suffer from information overload. I read recently that a good Sunday newspaper contains more printed material than a literate person in the Middle Ages would see in a lifetime. Human knowledge is growing so rapidly that it is estimated to be doubling every 18 months. And we need to keep up. We need to hurry. At least that's what we tell ourselves. We can get so busy trying to learn and keep up and accomplish things that at the end of a busy day we ask ourselves, "What did I accomplish today? I kept busy, but didn't get anything done! There are just not enough hours in the day!" Maybe we should take some advice from the 59th Street Bridge Song.

Video Clip: 59th street bridge song FEELING GROOVY SLOW DOWN by Paul Simon

Slow down, you move too fast. We all need to hear that. That is what last week was about for me, going up to Colorado away from cell phones and email, spending some quiet time reading and hiking and fishing and praying. It is easier for me to remember to read my Bible and pray when I am away from everything and isolated in the mountains. That is why I like going up there so much, the slower pace. It is one of those vacations that you don't feel like you need another vacation after you get back. It was truly relaxing. It is when I am back here in my normal every day routine that I don't do as well. Here what Martin Luther had to say on this subject.

I still find it necessary every day to look for time during which I may pray. And I am satisfied if, when I retire, I can recite the Ten Commandments, pray the Lord's Prayer, and then add a Bible verse or two. Meditating on these, I fall asleep. (What Luther Says, Plass, p. 1083)

How thin are you spread in your life? Do you have to search to find a few minutes for God?

- I listen to parents describe the transportation system in their households to make sure the kids get to all the different activities for which they have signed up, whether it be scouting or softball or gymnastics or parties or soccer or who knows what else! It sometimes sounds as though there is no time during which the family is just home together!
- And it is not much different for some folks after the kids leave. Both have their jobs and work crazy hours and are constantly on the go sometimes just passing each other at the door as one arrives home and the other is going to work.
- Maybe work is the problem, and things will change after you retire? I doubt it. Plenty of retired folks have told me repeatedly, "I don't know how I had time to do everything when I had a job!"

Why all the busyness? Maybe you've heard the old adage "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." So you resolve to keep yourself occupied at all times. Or maybe it is because you are trying to provide more for their families. But is occupying every single minute of the day really the best way to do that? Being so busy that you don't have time to spend with your children and your family can't be good. Some push themselves to earn more, get more, have more. But Jesus said,

Luke 12:15 a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

As followers of Jesus, we do well to look at what He did, his example. One thing Jesus did to recharge and refresh Himself was to go off by himself **to pray**.

Luke 5:16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

(See also Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12, 9:18,)

SLOW DOWN

- Take time for devotions – read a message from God’s Word or a booklet like Portals of Prayer
- Pray – talk to God about what is on your heart and going on in your life.
- Bible study – do it alone or with your family or with a small group. Spend time in the Word to let God speak to you.
- Talk – spouse, family, neighbors, church family. Find out what is going on in their lives. How often do you take the time to do nothing but talk to God? Slow down!

I would guess that many of us do a lot of nothing every day. Many of you do it sitting in front of the television even though you don’t like what you are watching. Or playing mindless video games. We tell ourselves it is the way to unwind, a distraction or diversion from the busyness. Yet we still feel the need to be doing something while trying to relax! Sometimes you need to slow down to the point where you can really ask yourself how things are going. How is it with your soul? How is your spiritual health?

When you slow down and reflect on your life, with all of its problems and failures and heartbreaks and joys and triumphs, you can also remember what puts everything into perspective. **(CROSS AND EMPTY TOMB)** You can be reminded of the love of God that has been shown to you in Jesus. No matter what else is happening, that stays constant. Through Baptism you have been cleansed and claimed as a child of the Creator. The payment Jesus made for sin has been credited to your account. Your faith grabs it and clings to it and assures you that you have been forgiven for Jesus sake, empowering you to live your tomorrows confident of God’s love.

Psalm 46 is one of the powerful Psalms that played a role in the reformation. It proclaims, “God is our refuge and our strength” and was the basis for Luther’s Hymn, “A mighty fortress is our

God!" I love that Psalm and that hymn, but there is another part of the Psalm that you need to hear as well. The one who is your refuge and strength say to you in v. 10: "*Be still and know that I am God.*" The Hebrew for "be still" probably means "Enough!" Enough with all the hustle and bustle and busyness and overfilling your schedules to the point that you can't even think straight. Slow down. Remember who God is and what He has done for you by sending Jesus to be your Savior.

I want to close this message today by sharing with you a song by a man named Steven Curtis Chapman. It is called "**BE STILL AND KNOW.**" As you listen, think about how you can slow down in your life.

Be still and know that He is God; Be still and know that He is holy.
 Be still Oh restless heart of mine Bow before the Prince of Peace
 Let the noise and clamor cease

Be still and know that He is God; Be still and know that He is faithful
 Consider all that He has done Stand in awe and be amazed
 And know that He will never change Be still

Be still and know that He is God; Be still and know that He is God
 Be still and know that He is God; Be still, Be speechless

Be still and know that He is God; Be still and know that He is our Father
 Come and rest your head upon His breast Listen to the rhythm of
 His unfailing heart of love Beating for his little ones Calling each of us to come
 Be still Be still