

July 21, 2024

“Rest and Compassion”

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Have you ever heard the word “hangry”?

It is a cross between hungry and angry, and it is the condition of a person who is so hungry they have also become angry, hence the combination of the words

Apparently it has been a word since the 1950’s, but it was entered into the Oxford English Dictionary in 2018, so I think that means it’s a legit word for Scrabble

My mother’s first encounter with “hanger” was not the word itself but the condition...of me, I was the one who was hangry

You see my mother and I were driving me home from California after seminary – she was accompanying me for the first half of the journey and my father accompanied me for the second half

On the very first day of our trip, we drove from Berkeley, CA to Las Vegas, NV (about an 8 hour drive)

We had packed most of my belongings into a pod except a few clothing items and my dog, Cinna

It was a long day, and an emotional day to boot! Leaving California after 5 years of study and life was hard

But the golden fields of California’s Central Valley and the desert of western Nevada had been the appropriate scenery to match my reflective mood

And then we got to Las Vegas – a senses overload!

Lights! Sounds! Smells!

After miles and miles of straight highway roads, we were navigating a very busy and bustling city

We pulled up to our hotel around 8pm having not eaten since lunch time

We picked a dog friendly hotel and as we pulled up there was valet parking, but when the valet got close to my car my docile dog who had been napping the whole trip suddenly became very defensive and started barking and growling at the valet

I decided to let my mom out of the car to check in and offered to find hotel parking for myself - which, you can guess, was quite far away.

My stomach was rumbling, my senses were overloaded, and now I have to walk in the extreme heat in a stinky parking garage with my dog who all of a sudden decided to be nasty

We get to the hotel lobby and said dog - whom I adored and miss terribly to this day – won't go in

The hotel lobby floor is black marble which to a color blind dog looks like a cavernous pit and he won't take one step onto it

I try to coax him, I wanted to use sweet words of encouragement but at this point the hanger was setting in....he wouldn't budge

So I do what any normal person would do in that moment

My mother said she looked back and saw me dragging the dog across the floor by his leash

We made it to the elevator, he begrudgingly entered and we finally got him to the room

It was about 9:30pm when we finally found ourselves in a restaurant ordering food and that's when I warned my mother that I was feeling a bit "hangry"

"Oh that's what we call this mood you're in?"

Yes, yes it is.

I'm sure none of you can relate.

I'm sure none of you have ever been hangry before. Which is why I'm happy to share with you my story so that you can *try* to relate to my sermon.

I'm not particularly proud of my actions, though I don't think I did any damage – my dog certainly forgave me, but I definitely wasn't my best in that moment

Unfortunately, it wasn't the first time I had experienced the condition of "hanger" and it was also certainly was not the last

It happens.

If, by chance, you relate to my story and perhaps have also experienced "hanger" or it's close sibling "angxhausted" – that one isn't in the Oxford Dictionary but it's certainly in the lexicon of my emotions, a cross between exhausted and angry – then perhaps you will also feel a bit of a sense of kinship with our brother Jesus in this morning's gospel lesson

Jesus' disciples have just returned from their first foray into taking on some of his ministry and Jesus is eager to hear all about it – but clearly there was

something in the way they returned that signaled to Jesus that what these disciples also needed was a break, they needed to get away for a minute

And, I perceive that Jesus needed a getaway, too – if you recall we read last week that Jesus had just found out about the murder of his beloved friend and cousin, John the Baptist, and my guess is Jesus also needed some time away

Jesus and his disciples are emotionally and physically exhausted, it doesn't sound like it had gotten to the level of angxhausted (where anger had entered the picture), but maybe it was close

“Come away with me” Jesus suggests, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while”

Jesus was human, afterall

We forget that sometimes, though, that Jesus was human – because we so often talk about him as God' son, the Lord, the Messiah, the Christ

Which he was, of course, those things, too – but he was also human

It's seemingly small plot lines in stories like the one from this morning that remind us of this, and I'm so grateful they do

Just like you and me, Jesus was human, his disciples were human, and just like you and me they got exhausted, probably hangry, and definitely needed some time away

But, poor Jesus, just like the parent of a toddler who is just trying to get a moment to herself to go to the bathroom in peace, Jesus and his disciples can't get away without a crowd following them

The people are also hangry – hungry for food, but also hungry for God’s word and healing, and they’re angry at the systems that have kept them hungry and angry at the leaders of those systems who don’t seem to care

And so even as Jesus is trying to get away for a moment, the people surround him

And what does Jesus do?

Does he say “leave me alone! please just give me a few minutes to myself!” like I often want to

That would be a very acceptable human response

But whether it’s his humanity or his divinity, Jesus’ response in the moment is to feed the people, to heal the people, to feel and show compassion to and for the people

The only stores from which I can imagine Jesus can draw from to be able to respond like that – to show that kind of love in that kind of moment – must be provided by the love and grace of God

In my moment of hanger, and yes in the moments of hanger since, I’m not my best self

But, what a wonder it is, that even in Jesus’ moment of wanting solitude or simply the company of his disciples in a deserted place to pray and reflect, that when the crowds descend, Jesus is his best self

For me, in those moments of hanger or angxhaustion, it feels like my stores of compassion and kindness are inaccessible – what an important reminder that this doesn’t have to be so

I may not be able to be my *best* self in those moments, like Jesus, but I can try to be compassionate

I fear that there are more moments ahead of us this summer and fall when we might feel hangry and angxhausted – not just from our own life's circumstances but also as a casualty of it being an election year

Now that one party's convention has happened and the other is on its way, it feels like the volume of the discourse – which we all know has already been loud and rather nasty – is just getting louder

There is a part of me that would love to come away with Jesus to a deserted place to rest for a while and get away from it all

And yet, I know, like Jesus knew, how important it is to engage and dwell in my community even when I'm hangry and angxhausted

I just pray that I can draw from the stores of God's love and grace and act with compassion and kindness like Jesus, too.

May it be so for all of us. Amen.