

Time off

By [Jennifer Moland-Kovash](#)

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*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page, which includes Moland-Kovash's current Living by the Word column as well as past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

In the summer we usually make a pilgrimage of sorts to visit family in Minnesota lake country. I generally think at least once on such a trip—usually while sitting in a boat in the middle of a lake—“I wish I could just stay here forever.”

Rest and vacation are good things. In that space, I am easily lured into thinking that if only we lived somewhere else, life would be different—more exciting or more restful, more laid back or more interesting. Whether vacation brings you to the big city or to a lakefront cottage, it's an alternative to the everyday experience. But it's not reality.

Moving to those places still necessitates work. The demands of life don't go away if you live in an idyllic setting, whatever idyll means to you. The gospel for this week has the disciples going away for a time of rest and retreat after they've returned from canvassing the countryside. But the story doesn't leave them there—in fact, the needs seem more pressing and urgent when they come back. People recognize them. The message of Jesus is spreading, and more and more people follow them, arriving in places even before they do.

I've heard people say (and perhaps even uttered the idea myself) that it's so much work to take time off: you work twice as hard to get ready to be gone, and then still have to catch up once you're back. Why bother, the sentiment seems to be.

Tucked into the scripture (but not included in the lectionary) is the message that in the midst of everything else, Jesus went away to pray. We would do well to include this verse in the reading on Sunday.