

Sermon 10-13-19
Paul Purdue preaching

Rest, Reset, Reframe and Recreate - Oct. 13, 2019

Do you feel a chirp of incompleteness, that nagging tug of the next thing, not enough time, the need to measure up, add another, get that, achieve like..., or not miss out? Our media saturated overly marketed world plays up incompleteness to buy our attention and sell us stuff. They amplify our perceived need to drive sales. Do we stop and step back to admire what is complete, excellent, worthy of praise, lovely, holy, good and whole? (Phillipians 4) Perhaps, Sabbath breaks the cycle of constant consumption and commodified incompleteness?

Do we practice resting in God? Do we pause our productivity, or are we always "on"? Do we give ourselves time "off" or "set apart" to catch up with ourselves, with each other, and with God? Sacred time allows our souls to rest, to reset, and to remember that we are created in God's image, loved by God, and created to love others. A few holy hours remind us who we really are!

The Bible opens with an inspiring liturgical poem. For seven days God creates: light, sky, fruit, stars, birds, people, and Sabbath! Now, on day seven the Creator rests, but the divine rest holds creative power, indeed the resting makes the time holy. God sanctifies time, setting it apart from work days. The Creation Poem holds a trinitarian rhythm: 1) God speaks, 2) God creates, 3) God names the inherent goodness. The Word speaks. The Creator creates. The Sustainer blesses. Hear that three step pattern in days one, four, and seven:

When God began to create the heavens and the earth
the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea,
and God's wind/breath/spirit swept over the waters— God said, "Let there be light."
And so light appeared. God saw how good the light was.
God named the light Day and the darkness Night.
There was evening and there was morning: the first day.
Day two sea and sky. Day three flowers and fruit.
God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night.
They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years.
God made the stars and two great lights: God saw how good it was.
The Sun to rule the day, the moon to rule the night.... And the stars!
There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.
Day five birds and fish. Day six horses and humanity.
Now, when God saw everything God had made: God proclaimed it all "supremely good."
There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.
The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed.
On the sixth day God completed all the work that God's self had done,
and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that God's self had done.
God blessed the seventh day and made it holy,
because on the sabbath God rested from all the work of creation.
Did you notice how the Creator steps back from the easel and simply abides?
The Trinity slides away from the design chair, lays down the tools, and rests. I can
imagine the Word strumming a new song, as the Spirit dances, and the Creator claps
and laughs adding to the rhymes. The three dwell together in Holy Communion. Maybe,
the Creator points out the green to purple contrast in the hummingbird. Imagine God at
rest, a divine change of pace, holiness created by intentional non-productivity.

On day four God made the stars to mark sacred time: go to bed, arise and worship, remember the Sabbath. The Sabbath comes to change our pace, inviting us into a different ordering of time. Sabbath ceases our sense of “what is needing to be done” and says “unplug from that, be present with God, one another, and yourself. God, having completed that week’s work, God rested from all the work.” Could we believe creative loafing is a sanctifying practice? How could doing less be holy?

The market gods call us to altars of doing, working, buying, and earning our worth. The market spinmasters hum tunes wooing us to crave, complete, consume, conquer, earn, achieve, and then repeat. The anthems of rugged individualism leave us without enough and constantly checking our status against false idols of beauty, power and attention.

Sabbath pauses our productivity with a new vocabulary: awe, abide, adore, believe, baptize, become, confess, commune, consecrate, celebrate, free, forgive, faith, hope, hallelujah, love, liberate, pray, praise, pause, revive, renew, rekindle, transform, thank, give, offer, sing, spirit, soul, solitude, and sent. Where else do we regularly rehearse such soul-healing language? This pulling away from productivity is deeply counter-cultural. Sabbath changes our spiritual pace.

One Labor Day in the early 1980’s, my father and I were cleaning out an old hedge row with shovels, pick axes and a grey 1969 Chrysler station wagon affectionately named General Sherman. My dad left an abusive home at 18 to join the Army. He had begun earning his keep even before that. For years, my Dad sent money to a trusted Sunday School teacher so she might buy new dresses so that Dad’s two younger sisters might have something nice to wear to church. Dad could honestly say, “Paul Robert, you have no idea how good you have it.” So when I complained to Dad about working on the Labor Day holiday, Dad did not miss a beat, saying, “We labor on Labor Day. It’s in the name Paul.” Dad just laughed when I pointed out that work was a consequence of the fall. In Genesis 3, God created us to dwell in Eden’s gardens in communion with God and each other. It was only after our sin that work emerges and the thrones enter the hedgerows! Now Jesus, Moses, Paul, Lydia, and Ruth all dignified work. And some work may bring Sabbath. If your work tunes you into holy rhythms, rejoice! Seek such holy work. Offer all your work to God. If you work as a cashier, honor those in your line as created in God’s image. If you are an attorney, work for justice. If you are a healthcare professional, work to bring healing. If you are an engineer, design with beauty and serve people. If you are a preacher, serve God and neighbor, not just the institution. If you are a teacher, teach. If a student, seek an education not just grades. But know this, no matter how beautifully sanctifying day to day regular work might be, even Jesus withdrew, practicing daily holy hours.

On a mission to save the world, with overwhelming crowds seeking his attention, Jesus practiced Sabbath. He had a custom of changing the pace with retreat. Luke tells us, “Jesus left and made his way to the Mount of Olives, as was his custom, and the disciples followed him.” A custom of Sabbath changes us, empowers us, frees us for Holy.

Set aside some sacred space. Take out your phone and block out some time with the word “Sabbath”. Down in the notes section write, “catch up with myself, with God, with others. Change my pace. Remember my sacred worth. Remember God loves me. Remember those I love. Remember I am made to love.” Maybe set your timer for just 7 minutes each morning to go sit outside and listen with a spiritual ear to the bird’s songs. Maybe take a walk around the campus without earbuds. Pray and take a nap. Read a chapter from Luke’s Gospel. Read a spiritual book with no objective. Share a cup of coffee with someone with no goals for the meeting. Write a poem. Relax. Thank God for something. Turn off social media for a day, or at least a few sacred hours.

Worship. Sing with people. Practice a new vocabulary. Make time sacred with Sabbath.
Amen.