

LIFE TOGETHER SERMON SERIES

Week 4: A Community Of Rest In A Culture Of Exhaustion

As followers of Jesus, we are just as capable of following Jesus in some aspects of our lives as we are to completely reject Him in others. Keeping the Sabbath is a largely forsaken spiritual practice and commandment. We never hear people brag about committing murder, having an affair or stealing; but we regularly hear people, even in church, brag about how many days they worked that week, how late they worked, how in demand they are and how tired they are. We venerate workaholism even whilst we suffer under its cruel tyranny. The truth is, pathological busyness, workaholism, being unrested, is one commandment that we frequently brag about breaking. Many of us have adopted a pace of life that does not permit us to abide in God.

Over and against our culture of productivity, progress and burnout, Jesus invites us to be a community of rest – creating a different and alternative way of living in the midst of a culture of exhaustion all around us.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” – Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus' message is so good because His message is a message of rest. And I want you to see this invitation, He doesn't say: “Come to me and I'll make you successful.” He doesn't say: “Come to me and I'll heap religious commandments upon you.” He says: “Come to me and I'll give you rest.” Salvation is about rest. **The way of Jesus is rooted and anchored in rest.**

Jesus intends for you to have life to the full. This is not prosperity gospel, this is the actual gospel Jesus. It is Jesus contrasting Satan coming to steal, kill and destroy. Jesus being the Good Shepherd offers us life more abundantly.

Following Jesus' invitation to rest in Matthew 11 are two stories about the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is a day to simply stop or cease. It is to stop working, stop planning, stop wanting, stop accumulating, stop achieving – to rest in God and delight in Him.

Ruth Haley Barton defines Sabbath this way:

“(Sabbath)... is more than just a day of rest; it is a way of ordering one's entire life around a pattern of working six days and then resting on the seventh. It is an approach to living in time that helps us honour the rhythm of things — work and rest, fruitfulness and dormancy, giving and receiving, being and doing, activism and surrender.”

Most followers of Jesus no longer practice Sabbath. This means many of us are missing out on one of the most life-giving practices of the way of Jesus, and arguably, one of the most important for our cultural moment.

We find the idea of Sabbath in the opening pages of Scripture.

“By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done.” - Genesis 2:2-3

We observe a few things from the text:

- God built a rhythm into the fabric of creation.
- God blessed the Sabbath day.
- God made the Sabbath day, holy.

This passage is the first time the word “Holy” is used in all of scripture. This is intriguing. You would think that after creating the world, God would make a holy space — a mountain or a temple or a shrine.

But this God doesn’t have a holy space; He has a holy time — the Sabbath. **Instead of erecting for Himself a holy place, God makes a holy day.**

Abraham Joshua Heschel sums it up beautifully when he says: *“The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals. Architecture in time”*.

Discussion Questions:

1. What activities do you find most restful and restorative? Activities that connect you to God?
2. Have you ever experienced a lack of rest affecting your relationships, spiritual life, emotional health etc.?
3. Is Sabbath already a part of your life, or no? If yes, to what extent?
4. What has been (or do you sense will be) your greatest obstacle in practicing Sabbath?
5. What do you think has to change in your life for Sabbath to become a part of your practice?

How to Practice the Sabbath (<https://realitysf.com/how-to-practice-sabbath/>)