

Sunday, June 11, 2017 – I'm So Busy: Practicing Sabbath

Genesis 2:1-4 CEB

Marysville United Methodist Church

Pastor Jenny Smith

There have been many seasons in my life where someone asked how I was doing and my answer was, "I'm so busy." Between kids, work, marriage, exercise, trying to eat well, hobbies and whatever else I could fit in, there wasn't much down time. I was running on fumes and pushing myself through. At some point in that mess, I decided this was not sustainable and I didn't want to live like that. I was so thankful to discover God didn't want me to live like that either.

What about you? If you had to pick one of these to describe your season in life right now, what would you pick?

- Absolutely exhausted - way too busy
- Doing okay - sometimes stressed, sometimes balanced
- Feeling pretty good - times to work, times to rest

People can text JENNYSMITH335 once to 22333 to join your session. Then they respond with A, B, or C when the poll is active.

In the relentless busyness of modern life, we have lost the rhythm between work and rest. All life requires a rhythm of rest. There is a rhythm in our waking and sleeping. Changing seasons. The tidal rhythms. Our body's rhythms of breathing.

Our culture invariably supposes that action and accomplishment are better than rest, that doing something— anything—is better than doing nothing. Because of our desire to succeed, to meet these ever-growing expectations, we do not rest.

There is a universal refrain: **I am so busy.**

Despite good hearts and equally good intentions, our work in the world rarely feels light, pleasant, or healing. Instead, as it all piles endlessly upon itself, the whole experience of being alive begins to melt into one enormous obligation. It becomes the standard greeting everywhere: I am so busy.

We say this to one another with no small degree of pride, as if our exhaustion were a trophy, our ability to withstand stress a mark of real character. The busier we are, the more important we seem to ourselves and, we imagine, to others. To be unavailable to our friends and family, to be unable to find time for the sunset (or even to know that the sun has set at all), to whiz through our obligations without time for a single, mindful breath, this has become the model of a successful life (Mueller).

Today, we're going to talk about the spiritual practice of Sabbath. We spent three weeks last September working through this practice and today is a refresher. We'll share the highlights from that sermon series. It's crazy to think we would talk about a practice once and master it, so from time to time, I like to share some of our content again, to help jog our memories and our souls. And for those who are new to our community, you get to jump in with us. Today, I'll share a few reflections on Sabbath time and then we'll talk specifics in your life.

The Sabbath time is holy. God doesn't say that about anything else. One of the most distinguished words in the Bible is the word *qadosh*, holy; a word which more than any other is representative of the mystery and majesty of the divine. Now what was the first holy object in the history of the world? Was it a mountain? Was it an altar? It is, indeed, a unique occasion at which the distinguished word *qadosh* is used for the first time: in the Book of Genesis at the end of the story of

creation. How extremely significant is the fact that it is applied to time: “And God blessed the seventh day and made it *holy* (*Gen 2:3*).” 7 There is no reference in the record of creation to any object in space that would be endowed with the quality of holiness.

Jen Hatmaker says it this way, “We belong to a culture that can’t catch its breath; rather, we refuse to catch our breath. God doesn’t pull any punches here: The Sabbath is holy. Not lazy, not selfish, not unproductive; not helpful, not optional, not just a good idea. Holy.”

So we must let go of this notion that rest is lazy. For some of us in different generations, this is especially difficult. We have it hardwired into us to never stop. Productivity is the highest value. This is not true in the kingdom of God.

Practicing the Sabbath is a stewardship issue. It’s about how we arrange our lives. But I used to think Sabbath was merely about changing my calendar around. In fact, I started seeing a counselor a couple months after I arrived in Marysville merely because I needed help finding balance in my life while I tried to juggle a new job, family, marriage, etc. I thought I just needed to figure out the magic balance of all the pieces in my life. But as usual, the “fix” is never that easy. I had to rearrange my soul’s relationship to work and rest. This has proven to be a much more fruitful journey than just moving around events on my calendar.

A couple things to think about as you reflect on your relationship to rest and work.

We must acknowledge how foreign the concept of Sabbath can feel for our culture. For many, this is a difficult practice. It takes intention and discipline.

Sabbath is a time to turn off the voices that tell me I’m not _____ enough. *Connected, organized, encouraging, wise, beautiful, producing, smart, funny...*

Because Sabbath is about identity. This is the time all those other things fade and you simply exist as a child of God. And that’s enough. You can see why it’s so important to God. God wants your full attention.

Sabbath is a day or period of time that looks different than the others. What feeds your soul? Do those things.

When we spend a day moving more slowly, it reveals the insanity of the other days.

Sabbath is entering into a different mode of time. Usually we think about productivity when we think about time. Two hours can get me _____. We relate to time differently on Sabbath.

For adults, **play is wasting time on purpose**. I had a conversation with my five year old several months ago and asked what her job is in life. “To play, Mom.” I told her I need help learning how to do that more -- sometimes I want to work and get things done too much that I forget how to play -- I asked her to keep teaching me.

It takes practice to learn how to rest and play. Rob Bell once said, “When we took a day and took away that constant stimulus - my body was like, “what are you doing to me?” It took months to adjust.

Sabbath is not dependent upon our readiness to stop. We do not stop when we are finished. We do not stop when we complete our phone calls, finish our project, get through this stack of messages, or get out this report that is due tomorrow. We stop because it is time to stop.”- Wayne Muller

When I first began practicing the Sabbath on Fridays, I remember waking up with a running to do list in my head. Things that needed done around the house. Good things. But as I read and learned more about Sabbath time, I realized I was starting the day with the wrong intention. So now, I'm slowly getting stronger at starting every day with quiet, reflecting on a small piece of scripture, writing in my journal, yoga or going on a walk around the neighborhood in the early morning light. On days I skip this practice, I notice all day long. On days I show up to those things, I notice all day long. I move slower through meetings, decisions and conversations. I'm more present to the people in front of me. They're not something to check off my list.

These practices remind me when left unchecked, I will speed up the pace of my life without even realizing it. But **practicing Sabbath moments each morning and on Fridays is slowly rewiring the entire way I relate to time.**

Because friends, you are the steward of your own energies. No one else can steward them like you can. Your energy is the most sacred, holy gift you have. Don't waste it.

In this season of life, what might your Sabbath practice look like?

First, we must remember that the Sabbath had to be planned for, food gathered a day in advance. It wasn't handed to the Hebrews on a silver platter. This principle remains. I still have to plan for the Sabbath, tying up loose ends and gathering what we'll need. I still have to prepare the family for rest, enforcing healthy boundaries and protecting our calendar. (Hatmaker)

Start small. Have a Sabbath meal, a Sabbath evening, a Sabbath afternoon. The to do list is put away. Make a new list of things that make your heart happy. Do 1-2 of those things. Some may be with others, some may be by yourself.

We literally have a sheet of paper on the wall in our kitchen called "Sabbath: Things that make our heart happy." Walking outside, biking, reading, sleeping in, music, no screens or work, creating things, adventures, dance parties, etc. These things restore us and remind us who we really are - this enables us to continue to serve and love others.

Sabbath is when we practice the grace of uselessness. Productivity is not a value in Sabbath time. What matters is remembering your true identity: You are a child of God. Loved before you do anything. Valued before you become something else. God delights in your existence now, not when you get to wherever you think you're going.

Friends, honor the Sabbath. Keep it holy. This isn't a feel good reminder to have a great relaxing summer. This is a command from the One who created you to enter into holy time with your Creator.

The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. 2 On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. 3 God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.

Amen!