

“God Created Us with a Rhythm of Work and Rest”

Sermon notes by the Rev. Arnold A. Bush, Priest in Charge, Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, Tallassee, AL 36078, July 22, Proper 11B.

Texts: Mark 6:30-34,53-56, (Pew Bible 1532) Psalm 23

Summary Sentence: A day in the life of Jesus and his apostles too busy to take a lunch break. In realizing this Jesus said, “Come with me by yourselves to a QUIET PLACE and get some REST...so they went away by themselves in a boat to a SOLITARY PLACE.” Taking Sabbath time is not just an external law within the Biblical tradition, but really a rhythm fundamental to being human.

I. Introduction: Examples of “break time” in our culture

How many times have we seen on a sign: Lunch break, On coffee break, Exercise break after lunch at Pentagon in DC, Smoke Break, Restroom or “Washroom” break in England, in high school football games--water break in each quarter, “Siesta” in Central American countries? There is one break I want you to remember and understand: A SABBATH BREAK OR SABBATH DURING A BUSY DAY. I first heard about this from physicians in the University Medical School. An MD said in the middle of the day he closes the door to his office and takes a few minutes to pray, during which time he has conversational prayer or reads a prayer or some pages from a devotional book. Sabbath time is a time to rest and also to make self-conscious contact with Jesus. Keep this image in your mind: A SABBATH BREAD. Open BoCP to page 947 to paraphrase of 4th Commandment: *“And to set aside regular times for worship, prayer and the study of God’s ways.”*

II. Sharpen the saw renewing four dimensions of yourself

A second image I want to leave with you came from the book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey. He died this past week in Idaho Falls, Idaho. As I read the article about his death, I recall the seventh habit in his book mentioned a metaphor about Sabbath Time. It is the Habit called SHARPEN THE SAW. I have taught a course on the book in two congregations. Here is the origin of this metaphor: A persons is in the back yard sawing wood into smaller pieces for firewood. The gentleman is just sawing away to make many smaller pieces to fit into the fireplace. After observing him a few minutes he says, “Why don’t you sharpen your saw? The man says, “I’m too busy to sharpen my saw.” If he would only take the time out to sharpen the saw, then he would be more productive in cutting up the firewood. Stephen Covey writes Sharpening the Saw involves RENEWING THE FOUR DEMENSIONS OF OUR NATURE: (1) Spiritual (Study, Meditation, Value Clarification and Commitment): (2) Mental (Reading, Visualizing, Planning, Writing); Physical (Exercise, Nutrition, Stress Management); and Social/Emotional (Service, Empathy, Synergy, and Intrinsic Security).

How many of us are too busy to sharpen our saw? Taking care of our spirit, soul, and mental, emotional and physical dimensions of ourselves. There are several thousand folks driving up and down Gilmer Avenue. They are too busy stop to sharpen their saw! Study, meditate, plan, visualize, and embrace a service to others, exercise. Do you know one thing you have done today? You have come to worship, allowing the Holy Spirit to massage your soul and members to affirm you as a child of God.

III. Today, Having a Cleaning Day or Workday on Sunday?

The decision to have this CLEANING DAY after came from a discussion in the Vestry last Sunday as we were talking about “keeping our sacred space and classroom clean. I suggested a Saturday morning but someone suggested a Sunday, because we are a regional church and most members live 20 minutes away. Also, I recall some years ago someone wanted to have a work day, cut the grass, power wash the parking lot and exterior walls, clean windows, etc. Someone in another parish said “I do not want to be a part of breaking the commandment, ‘Thou shall keep the Sabbath Day Holy.’” “On the Sabbath Day you shall not do any work, neither you nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant.” Exodus 20:8 (Pew Bible 109). I recall someone saying that we do not want to appear to the folks driving by that we do not believe in keeping the 10 Commandments. In those days I thought this commandment was all about how to observe the Lord’s Day for Christians. I grew up where there were “Blue Laws”: prohibitions on Sunday, no movies, no work, no games, etc. Tilden Edwards’ book *Sabbath Time*, published in 1982, has been a great help to me. Fr Edwards is an Episcopal Priest and long-time Director of Shalom Institute in Washington, DC. Here is what I learned from Fr. Edwards. The rhythm of life understood by most non-Christians or secularists assumes RHYTHM BASED ON A SORT OF OSCILLATION BETWEEN:

- (a) A driven achievement, a drive to perform, a placing all your energy in achieving a work goal both on and off the job on the one hand and
- (b) Some form of mine-numbing private escape. If the pressure at work becomes too much then you and I are tempted to collapse into some form of oblivion such as sleep, heavy drink, drugs, any kind of television (i.e., anything that will numb our self-production for awhile).

Life is a RHYTHM with an understanding of human kind that we are created in God’s Image. To be made in the image of God can mean two things: We are human beings who can create, produce, make, coordinate, organize, build, supervise, write, etc. We are being creative! But also, in the first chapter of Genesis the phase is repeated: “And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” Sabbath time is moments to reflect, to remember, to give thanks for the past, to make intentional cultivation with our relationship with God.

In the Gospel passage today, (Pew Bible bottom of page 1532, MK 6:30. In verse 6:7 Jesus has sent them out teaching in the villages. In verse 30 they are giving their report what happened. In giving their reports many folks keeping coming and going to see Jesus. They were so busy that they could not stop for lunch. No lunch break. Then he said let us go to a QUIET PLACE AND GET SOME REST. They go away to a solitary place.

III. Handout from Tilden Edwards’ book *Sabbath Time*

Note how Edwards uses arrows to show the relatedness of these Sabbath and Ministry categories. Sabbath time is developing our relationship with Christ; ministry is relating to nature and people. These categories are not defined in dualistic reality. It is not work and escaping to numbness. Note just a few: Letting go...Engagement/taking on; Being.... Doing; Receptive.... Active; Floating.... Swimming; Sailboat...Motorboat; Being Known....Knowing; Home.... Journey.

Ministry: Preparing the Altar with Bread and Wine... Sabbath; Experiencing Jesus as Staff of Life and Wine as the Joy I experience in Jesus.

Ministry: Cleaning this sacred space building...Sabbath Time; giving thanks for a place to worship God in Christ, identifying any clutter in my life that needs removing, preparing for Christ to be the honored guest at Eucharistic meal.

IV. Would you feel irritated with so many intruding upon your report session with Jesus?

Where would your focus be on that day on the coasts of the NW section of the Sea of Galilee? If Jesus' agenda was to be attentive to the sick and diseased, can you change your focus to his?

V. Seekers for Jesus or Seekers for the benefits Jesus gives us?

In our prayers, are we more interested in the benefits of living the Christian Life such as good health, peace, encouragement, good friendships, and assurance of eternal life? Or do we seek a deeper relationship with Christ, just enjoying this relationship?