

## September 8th – Scheduled To Death - Under the (False) Impression About Rest and Rejuvenation

Introduction – Futurists have speculated that with advancements in technologies it is possible that our work week will be reduced to 15 hours within a few decades. That 15-hour work week, if it materializes, would provide for more free time than ever for working adults. But even if that were to come true it would not mean that people would find greater rest and meaningful forms of rejuvenation. Why you might ask? True rest and rejuvenation have nothing to do with how much we work, but more has to do with how we work.

Have you ever met someone who loved their work so much that they never grew tired of it? You are familiar with the old saying; “find a way to get paid for doing something you love, and it will never feel like a job.” There is an element of truth to this idea because it has to do with finding our purpose and then enjoying living out that purpose. When Rick Warren developed the “Purpose Driven Life”, he never expected it would become so popular and expanded, but it resonated with a generation of non-believers who were successful in their work, very busy in their lives, but not finding fulfillment (rest). His instinct to provide a framework for purpose was also shared with many “social justice” activist on university campuses who have exploited the need for purpose in young adults to create the cultural explosions we deal with politically and historically today. Like the group that doesn’t want you to enjoy your pumpkin spice treats this fall because 400 years ago the battle over nutmeg led to genocide! In our personal search for purpose in which we find rest from our work to discover significance, we are susceptible to those “strays and stupids” we talked about last week who will lead us astray and create doubt in God’s defined purpose for us.

We sometimes forget that God designed us as a part of His creation in which He created everything in six days and rested on the seventh. This is more than a historical fact; it speaks to the very nature of rest and work. Rest is more about purpose being completed in which all things have been put into order so that we live and move and have our being. As God’s creation, He has longed for us to get this concept and “enter into His rest.” It has been offered to us as His creation in many forms over many centuries, but most fully offered to us in the gospel message of Christ. Remember what we learned a couple of months ago when we talked about overcoming discouragement, disheartenment, and depression: **"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)

The true path to enter God’s rest is through Christ Jesus who inspires us with our true purpose in life which sets all things in order so that we can live and move and have our being. The writer of Hebrews makes this point in our text for today. But before we dig into that, let’s review what we discovered last week. As Joshua and Caleb had warned the Israelites about the Promised Land, the Hebrew writer warned Christians of the influence we sometimes fall under which keeps us from the “Land of Promise” in which God desires to provide and protect us. The argument continues:

**Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest." And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world. For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "On the seventh day God rested from all his works." And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest." Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, God again set a certain day, calling it "Today." This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. (Heb 4:1-10)**

The good news has been proclaimed so that through belief we “enter that rest.” At risk for us is disobeying this gospel message which then has no value to us and prevents us from God’s rest. The Hebrew writer then uses the concept of rest as taught the Jews and Christians who failed to enter that rest because of disobedience. So today when we hear how we can enter the Rest of God discovered in our purpose in Christ we must be

careful not to harden our hearts but enter that rest and rest from our work just as God did. Our settled purpose in Christ allows us to live and move and have our being in this rest of God.

My mom battled with her bosses for years over working on Sundays. As a waitress, she didn't mind being at work at 6:00 a.m. each morning, working until 2 p.m. each weekday, but she always politely let her bosses know she could not work on Sundays. For the most part this strategy worked for my mom because there were enough waitresses willing to work on Sundays that she wasn't mandated to work. But on a few occasions, she would be challenged about her convictions in this area and her boss would give her the ultimatum, work on Sundays or be fired. My mom was a great waitress because she developed relationships with her customers. She might have been personally responsible for the undoing of "stations" in restaurants in which a waitress would work a group of tables in her station. Her customers would come in and want to sit at her station of tables sometimes leaving other stations completely empty. This could make other wait staff complain that "Kay was getting all the customers and tips" so the manager would institute the alternation process. That meant customers would be seated on a rotation basis in whatever tables were available and whatever waitress was next in line got that customer. Some of mom's customers would actually wait until it was her turn to be seated! So when her boss would threaten her with the axe, she would say, do what you have to do, and I will do what I have to do. It wouldn't take her long to be picked up by another restaurant, and all her customers would follow her over to her new place of employment aggravating the owners and managers who let her go to make some strange point. My mom was never without work, and eventually moved to a job at the hospital where she agreed to work on some Sundays so those she worked with could go to church too. But I learned from my mom that the rest and rejuvenation we receive from God through our Sunday experience is worth fighting for, is worth making a statement over.

This is rare thing these days, and thankfully you might work for a place that doesn't operate on Sunday, but even if you do work on Sunday you can redeem them the best you can with the rest and rejuvenation experience God avails us through our belief in Christ Jesus who gives us true and meaningful rest. Mom did that by going to church in the evening because back in the day it was church Sunday morning, evening and Wednesdays. The important component of entering God's rest through Christ is trust and obedience. If need be, we can adjust and adapt our schedule to demonstrate our trust in God and our obedience to Christ Jesus. But too often what has happened is we fall under the false impression that we must get rest instead of it being given to us and under the false impression that we must go go go to be rejuvenated instead of God's grace rejuvenating us. Like Mr. Miyagi would tell Daniel when he was upset or afraid; "you lack balance!"

It is amazing how cultures of every kind from the beginning of time have developed weekly periods of rest so their bodies can rejuvenate. Even in cultures where there was no mention of Sabbath Rest there would be a weekly social construct in which a rest period would be enjoyed. This would apply to most but the slaves in those cultures. After the church period developed, when there would be a mix of Jew and Gentile believers coexisting, accommodations would be made to "remember the Sabbath" and "keep Holy the Day of the Lord." The early church made up primarily of Jewish Christians honored the Sabbath from sundown on Friday to sundown of Saturday. But as the church began to grow in the Gentile nations, the day of the Lord, Sunday became the day believers met; **Act 20:7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread...1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up...** The historical evidence of Sunday worship is so overwhelming and obvious it requires no real exam other than the fact that "here we are." God has made a way even in pagan cultures to help his creation find some form of rest and rejuvenation, but the only true and meaningful form is realized in the gift of rest given by God and grace of rejuvenation we enjoy through Christ. I must admit my bias in this matter but am unapologetic because in my 5 decades of Christianity this rest and rejuvenation keeps me going. But many of us are under the false impression that we must get our rest to keep going strong, and though this is true physically, it is also true that rest is given to us by God when we are obedient to Him. **Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also**

**have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed.** Physical rest without obedience to the gospel message makes us fall short of the valuable true rest God gives. The key to God's rest is hearing and obeying the gospel message and the most practical way we can do that is expose ourselves to it each Sunday morning. Obedience to the gospel message is more than just hearing it but making sure we put ourselves in the position to hear it. None of us watches T.V. by sitting in a different room from the set (wives, I know you have heard you husbands say from a different room; "hey, I'm watching that!"), and we don't listen to our tunes without speakers or earbuds. God gives us rest as a gift for entering into His rest. Our rest is living in accordance with His purpose for us of which we are exhorted weekly during the sermons, or lessons, or whatever to which we listen!

I figure that I have prepared and delivered over 3000 sermons, lessons, and devotions at a minimum. It has been my conviction to offer fresh bread each week, even though some of my illustrations are stale. I do this without thought of who might show up or if they are paying attention, but I do believe that God is using the message to bless those who hear with true rest from their work to save themselves. We learn through the gospel message that Jesus has saved us, we can rest in His work of salvation and live out our purpose. The sermons are designed to help us do just that.

But it is also true that many are under the false impression that the only way to rejuvenate is go out, go party, go have some fun, and though this might help us think we are rejuvenated, meaningful rejuvenation only comes through the grace of Christ making us new, not us trying every new thing that comes along. Again, don't get me wrong, I love to go have some fun like everyone and try new things, but I know nothing rejuvenates me meaningfully except the renewal I receive through grace. The Hebrews writer said; **"Now we who have believed enter that rest...There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his.** Paul, who probably wrote Hebrews explains; **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.** (Eph 2:8-10)

The first day of the week, the Lord's Day, Sunday, the day of our Lord, resurrection day, all refer to this time when we "do not forsake the assembling together as some are in the habit of doing" which the Hebrew writer says is "deliberate sin". We join together in connection with the very first meeting of believers in Jerusalem to encourage each other "toward love and good works". It is not about resting from our daily job, though we can accomplish that, it is being rejuvenated in our purpose of grace for the week to come. It is being reminded that rest is found in rejuvenating our purpose for life. Studies show that most workers are the most productive on Monday and Tuesday. But what about the other three days? This might indicate that we are getting physical rejuvenation by taking a break from our regular work, but shouldn't meaningful rejuvenation last us all week? It will only last if we are rejuvenated by grace as we are reminded, we are God' masterpiece to do good.

Some might say it is self-serving for me to suggest that the church experience is the only way for true rest and meaningful rejuvenation. That the only thing I care about is numbers and how it might reflect upon my leadership. But if that were true, I wouldn't stay here, what success story with me as the hero could I write in the scenario of preaching in a small rural town in Ohio? No, I love serving here because of things like our Labor Day Lunch in which on a day when many were taking an extra day off to rest, we had gathered to serve our community. It wasn't the \$1,350.00 we raised that mattered, it was this group of church family worked out their salvation and grace together as we laughed, sweated, cleaned, visited, reset. It reminded me of how we can enjoy the rest of God as we live out our purpose. It was tiring, but also restful and rejuvenating. Only God can take our energy and effort and convert it into rest and rejuvenation.

God desires what is best for us, and He asks for a small portion of our time to provide it to us. That is the thing about God, in six days He created something that has perpetually moved forward for 10,000 years, and He did so enjoying a "day of rest." Follow His example to rest and rejuvenation, and if you love those in your life, bring them to church with you so they can find rest and rejuvenation too. Schedule your time around church!