

## Creation Care 2 – Receiving the Sabbath

I have Good News and Bad news about our city. The Good news is that Philly has made the top ten in something! All Work & No Play - places that receive and take the least amount of vacation days (business journal)

1. Newark, NJ 2. Miami, FL 3. Bergen-Passaic, NJ  
**8. Philadelphia, PA** 9. Houston, TX 10. New York, NY

Like many Americans we have a propensity to have willingly walked away from taking time vacation — this national trend that has some experts worried that workers are not getting away from their jobs to relax and recharge, both physically and mentally and I would add spiritually. The reasons vary, from having too few vacation days available to lacking money for travel. But more often than not, it seems, many people just aren't getting into the habit of getting away. A recent study by Orbitz, the online travel company, found a drop in the number of people taking three-week or two-week vacations and an increase in those taking a week or less. One-third of respondents said they took five or fewer days of vacation in the past year.

- One in four of those surveyed said they felt their bosses did not encourage them to take vacations, and one in three said they stayed connected with their office via phone or computer while on holiday
- Labor experts (Wallace Huffman, a professor at Iowa State University), say we Americans work longer hours than their European counterparts. While many Europeans take four to six weeks of vacation — *often including the entire month of August when factories close* — many Americans take no vacation at all. Why?
  - He said it could be difficult for working couples to coordinate time off.
  - People work that they'll fall hopelessly behind at work if they take even a few days off or they may not have a job when they return.
  - There's also technology that can keep some people connected to their jobs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year — creating the sense they can never get away.
  - guilt

The reality is however "In the short run, it can reduce productivity," he said. It's critical that people take periodic vacations that allow their minds — and their bodies — to rest."<sup>1</sup> This study reinforces the sad fact that our workaholic culture looks down on people taking their well-earned vacation time,. Yet scientific study after study shows that job performance increases after a vacation, because you come back recharged and rejuvenated in essence "Time off is medicine. It's as important to your health as watching your cholesterol or getting exercise. An annual vacation can cut the risk of heart disease in men by 30 percent and in women by 50 percent. It also can cure burnout. The study is a wake-up call for people to step back from the stress and take their vacation time."<sup>2</sup>

My wife thankfully introduced me to the notion of vacation, resting, time away. Like many of you I came from a family where you worked, and worked and worked – in fact my father during the weeks his factory closed – August and Christmas week, he would hustle around looking for

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<sup>1</sup> Powell Eileen , AP Business Writer Thu Jul 12, 9:56

<sup>2</sup> Half of America's Workers In ``Vacation Crisis"; Universal Orlando Releases Findings of First ``All Work & No Play" Study [Business Wire, May 17, 2005](#)

small jobs that's what I thought vacation meant – you got another job! If you think about it for a moment we live in a world that no longer stops, no longer sleeps. Think about, there was a certain rhythm to the day....

- How many remember when All the TV channels/stations went off at 2:00
- The city lights on the side streets began to automatically begin flash after
- At midnight or so, public transportation between 12-6 simply shut down

Today because of the internet, shift work, dual careers, international trade and markets open somewhere all the time, cable network channels, cell phones, I Pods and the list goes on we are bombarded 24/7, 365 days non-stop with receiving and discerning information, moving from point a to point b, activity..... so much so that there is no rhythm or distinct beat to our lives, one could argue there is merely noise. I do not go down memory lane – WIWAK - as if the advances of today haven't been beneficial – for they have. **Nevertheless we also have to come to grasp that as we participate in this consumer and profit driven at all costs, entertainment driven, non-stop work to you drop reality, it not only impacts us individually and in our families, church community but as we have been studying the last few weeks this all or nothing, right now, by any means necessary has effected how we collective have ravaged our earth – profit, supply and demand, because we can rather than asking the question should we - should we have built cities, condo's, beach front rentals where nature has said no thereby causing flooded communities to our south and torched communities to our west.** We do not allow the land to rest, a Sabbath thereby so much of natural resources such as topsoil (build a composts locally), is lost for generations, we drill for oil 24/7 on coast lines impacting aquatic life to feed our gasoline addiction (drive less, car pool, walk), we breed cattle and chicken with fast growing growth hormones (eat less meat) to accelerate there production to keep up with our insatiable appetite for meat. Many of our natural fruits and vegetables I am told are difficult to maintain thereby they are given various pesticides (buy local on Thursdays).....as we as people of faith in Jesus Christ are called, invited to live dramatically differently .....

**Central Theme: since we do not value rest, restoration of the body, mind neither do we value resting the rest of creation allowing it to be naturally restored, naturally replenished, to rest. ....I take what I can get forgetting those (generations) who come after..**

**In the beginning God created.....**

**Genesis 2:2-4 By the seventh day God had finished his work. On the seventh day he rested from all his work. God blessed the seventh day. He made it a Holy Day because on that day he rested from work, from all the creating God had done.**

The Bible tells us that God made the Sabbath at the time of Creation, after He made the world and everything in it. Genesis 2 tells us that God rested on the Sabbath and blessed and sanctified it or set it apart for a holy use. Our text this morning from the Gospel of Mark is a continuation of God's purpose for the Sabbath day by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.....

**"And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath:  
"Mark 2:27**

The Sabbath is a reminder of God's continual grace in the world. – the grain the disciples were eating was another example of God's grace and gift of food Creator God has given the Earth to us his creation as a gift – and here the good part these gifts are not conditional on where or not we are deserving of it. Our call is to receive this gift named Sabbath and walk in it. Have you ever tried to give someone a gift and instead of them just saying thank you they talk about what they are not experiencing or what they do not have, or where they would like to be....open the

gift and hush! When we begin to recognize the Sabbath as a gift of Grace it permits us, allow us to pause in our frantic efforts to be everything, to everyone, all at the same time. Understanding the value of the Sabbath Grace allows us to rejoice faithfully in the spirit of thanksgiving for all of God's creation. The Sabbath is a sign of the continual possibility of redemption, of restoration, of rest for our souls. **The Psalmist is right when he reminds us of Sabbath praise...**

**24 This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Ps 118**

**1 I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." Ps 122**

**Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy....I wait for the Lord...Ps 130**

**How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! Ps. 133**

The Sabbath belongs fully to God and if we are honest each of us, including your Pastor we struggle with the harsh reality in a society that communicates we are what we do, we are what we wear, we are what we have accomplished.....the Sabbath observance, receiving the Sabbath Grace is hard...but perhaps because it is here it is by God's grace what sets us apart. In our text Jesus tells the Pharisees/Religious folk in his day – who you are, what you do, who you know, what you have been taught, what denomination you belong too, what you will accomplish and or fail at is secondary to who I am – I was there at the beginning, I know what the Sabbath is for...

**" The Sabbath was made for people, and not people for the Sabbath: So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" Mark 2:27**

Interestingly the Hebrew word Sabbath translated, has the primary meaning not of merely "rest," in terms of relaxing or rejuvenating, but rest in the form of **"to desist from exertion" or "to cease."** To cease doing something – or standstill. **Jesus was giving them a Cease-and-desist order**<sup>3</sup> an order to halt their policing activity and simply receive the gift of Sabbath grace – stop policing the grain fields and worship me.....the Lord of the Sabbath!

In other words in the creation account our God didn't take a Sabbath because God was tired and needed a break....rather God rest was because God is God. This makes perfect sense considering that God does not get tired (Isaiah 40:28)! Genesis 2 states that at the end of Creation, God stopped the labors of speaking creation into being, not because He was tired, but because God was setting an example for all of God's creation – as I have done for you, now you do for me cease doing work and worship me....not necessarily because your tired – though you maybe, not because you feel like it – though this maybe the case, not because your place of employment is closed – though that is indeed a bonus, nor do we “stay home from work” merely because the football game is on..... Rather we “cease and desist” work and receive this day an extension of the grace of God, a God that didn't create us to go 24/7, 365 days a year, non stop, rather from the very beginning we, you and I, and all creation was created for Sabbath. Our time

<sup>3</sup> **Wikipedia**, <http://en.wikipedia.org>

of Sabbath is to focus on all that God has done in the past (Creation), all the God is doing in the present and as the saints of the pass would say to me – even if I die this day I am satisfied with my God....Sabbath is also resting, trusting, hoping, praying for what God is yet to do. The Bible tells us from the very beginning God blessed this specific day of the week and sanctified it, made it holy—He set it apart for a specific purpose. Just as God deliberately sets apart or sanctifies those people with whom He is working, He purposefully made the Sabbath day different from the other six.

In our text this morning we read not only did God create the Sabbath day—and thus it belongs to Him; **Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28)**—but our God has also made the Sabbath separate and distinct from the other six days. In six days God created, worked, build, designed, constructed....but in the midst of the work, in the midst of busyness of creation Creator God contemplated that this enough. An alternate translation would be that it the Sabbath "was made on account of man." Jesus presents it as His specific and thoughtful gift to man – act of Grace.

It is important to note that for the people of God this Sabbath understanding expanded beyond one day of the week. Through the Patriarch Moses we read also of the.....**Sabbatical Year**<sup>4</sup>

The seventh year, devoted to cessation of agriculture, and holding in the period of seven years a place analogous to that of the Sabbath in the week; also called "Year of Remission". Three prescriptions were to be observed during the year (Exodus 23:10-11; Leviticus 25:1-7; Deuteronomy 15:1-11, 31:10-13):

- **Check this out the land was to lie fallow and the agricultural labor was to be suspended.** There was to be neither plowing nor sowing, nor were the vines and olives to be attended to. The spontaneous yield was not to be taken up, but was to be left in the fields for common use, and what was not to be abandoned to the cattle and wild animals (Exodus 23:10-11; Leviticus 25:1-7). The prescribed rest was for the land, not for man. Hence work other than agricultural was not forbidden, nor even work in the fields which had no direct connection with raising crops, such as building walls of enclosure, digging wells, etc.
- No crops being reaped during the sabbatical year, the payment of debts would have been a great hardship, if not impossibility, for many. Hence **the creditor was commanded "to withhold his hand" and not to exact a debt from an Israelite, though he might demand it of strangers, who were not bound to abstain from agricultural pursuits (Deuteronomy 15:1-3).**
- During the sabbatical year, this is important the Law was to be read on the Feast of Tabernacles to all Israel -- men, women, and children -- as well as to the strangers within the gates, that they might know and fear the Lord, and fulfill all the words of the Law (Deut31:10-13).

**Sabbatical Year contains three main points for our conversation on Creation Care:**

- **reversion of landed property to its original owner, who had been driven by poverty to sell it; and**
- **the freeing those Israelites who, through poverty or otherwise, had become the**

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<sup>4</sup> New Advent (Catholic Encyclopedia, Church Fathers, Summa, Bible and more) at <http://www.newadvent.org/>

slaves of their brethren. (well talk about the other two on another sermon on the Jubilee)

- rest of the soil;

Sabbath year like our Sabbath at Creation, and our today Sunday our Sabbath, the Sabbath year meant a time to rest the soil, rest the land, rest God's creation – in turn an agricultural people would be at REST.....not necessarily because they.....

The first two mandates are social in nature:

But the third mandate is rest for soil, is ecological purely ecological. the main object for which the sabbatical year was instituted was to bring home to the people that the land was the Lord's, and that they were merely stewards (Lev 25:23).

- rest the land – from creation the Sabbath has been an act of grace.....

But least we forget Jesus desires rest for our souls. Amen?

**28"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."**

The Jews used the image of a yoke to express submission to God. They spoke of the yoke of the law, the yoke of the commandments, the yoke of the kingdom, the yoke of God. Jesus says his yoke is "easy". The Greek word for "easy" can also mean "well-fitting". Yokes were tailor-made to fit the oxen well. We are commanded to put on the "sweet yoke of Jesus" and to live the "heavenly way of life and happiness". Jesus also says his "burden is light" therefore rest is possible.

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