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Genesis 1:26—2:3 – *Sabbath: the Divine Rhythm*

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Genesis 1:26—2:3

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

²⁹ Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ 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.

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

[Uptown Funk Instrumental](#)

Hold in your mind the days of creation as you listen to the song...

Imagine God adding beauty to the world as different instruments are added:

It starts with a regular clap;

Adds a guitar;

Then drums;

Then a bass guitar;

Then a synthesizer;

And it builds to a crescendo with a trumpet adding rhythm.

In the beginning...

God creates a rhythm.

God creates a beat or a pattern for His world.

We see it in the days of creation...

A rhythm of repeated words and phrases:

And God said let there be light; (day 1)

And God said let there be sky; (day 2)

And God said let there be land; (day 3)

And God said let there be lights in the sky; (day 4)

And God said let the waters teem with living creatures; (day 5)

And God said let the land produce living creatures. (day 6)

There is a rhythm of God speaking and things happening for 6 days.

And at the end of every day, we read:

“There was evening and there was morning” ...

...the first day;

There was evening and there was morning, the second day;

There was evening and there was morning, the third day;

There was evening and there was morning, the fourth day;

There was evening and there was morning, the fifth day;

There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day;

In the story of creation, God sets a rhythm.

Then on Day 7 the rhythm changes:

There is no more “*And God said...*” to begin the day.

There is no more “*And there was evening and morning...*” to end the day.

The rhythm doesn’t stop on Day 7...

But it sure does change.

On Day 7, God’s rhythm reaches a crescendo—

There is light now breaking through the darkness;

A blue sky separating the crystal waters;

Land—

Black Alberta soil, red Georgia clay, white sands of Cuba;

The warmth of the sun and the companionship of the ever-seeing moon;

The beautiful song of the Robin filling the air;

And the laughter of the first human beings—

God’s rhythm builds over 6 days and reaches a crescendo on the 7th.

A day that is different from all the others...

A day where God creates something not in *space*—

He doesn’t create another tree, animal, insect, mountain, or another human—

No, God creates something in *time*.

The 7th Day...

The Sabbath:

“Last in creation, first in intention, the Sabbath is the end of the creation of heaven and earth.” (Abraham Heschel)

It is on this day that God—

The Lord of the Universe—

Rested.

After creating the heavens and the earth in their vast array...

God rested. Halted. Ceased. Stopped.

And, in doing this, he weaves a divine rhythm into creation...

He weaves a divine rhythm into our existence.

Work and rest.

Work and rest.

Work and rest.

Or should we say, “Rest and work”?

Rest and work.

Rest and work.

Because it was on the 6th day that we were created.

So, our first full day in existence was the day of rest.

In Jewish time—

As we saw in the rhythm of Genesis—

There is evening and there is morning, the first day.

The day doesn't start in the morning when you wake up...

The day starts in the evening.

The day starts with rest.

That most vulnerable time...

When you lay on your back with your head on your pillow...

And surrender yourself to unconscious existence.

You don't keep your heart beating or your lungs breathing.

We surrender ourselves to our Creator...

Heading off into an unconscious rest.

And while we are sleeping...

God begins his creative activity...

God gets the day going in the evening.

And in the morning God calls us to enjoy, share and develop the day he has started. (Eugene Peterson)

It begins in God's rhythm...

Rest and work. Rest and work.

This is the pattern God establishes for his creation...

1 day of rest.

6 days of work.

One day set aside/devoted to enjoying the Creator.

But, did you know that there is an actual condition called “beat-deafness”?

If you are “beat-deaf” you have trouble holding a beat or rhythm.

If there is a song—

Like the one we started the sermon with—

You cannot stay with the rhythm.

When it comes to syncing with God’s rhythm of rest and work...

I wonder how many of us are “beat-deaf.”

We cannot keep the rhythm that the Creator established.

Our tendency is that we don’t know how to rest.

We don’t know how to stop, cease, and be still.

I don’t know how to rest!

Especially since the pandemic started...

I have trouble being still with the Lord.

When I finally do get down time...

I’ll plop myself on the couch...

And my instinct is to get out the phone and check the news.

Screens are always there: TVs, phones, and iPads.

Or my mind will go to what needs to be done around the house—

New doors, new floor, finish the trim...

Quick, get on YouTube to research the next home project.

I am not in sync with God’s rhythm of rest and work.

What’s this all about?

Because I know I’m not the only one.

Not only are we killing ourselves from overwork... (statistically overwork leads to greater risk of stroke and heart disease; 55+ hours/week)

We're not taking the time to be still before our God...

If we do "rest," we're not resting with the Lord...

We are not living in God's rhythm for our lives.

Looking at some of the reasons for our 'beat-deafness'...

We might be able to slowly align ourselves with God's rhythm.

So, why are we beat-deaf?

What keeps us from resting with the Lord?

First, we fail to recognize our limitations.

This takes us back to the first sin of Adam and Eve.

Instead of letting God be God...

They tried to play God.

They wanted all of the knowledge and to control their own lives and destiny.

They tried to set themselves over the Creator...

Or at least put themselves on the same level.

But they were not God.

And neither are we.

This means that we have limitations:

We have limited amounts of energy;

We can only be so productive;

We need sleep;

We need to eat;

We need to rest.

Some of us live in a way that suggests:

"This world will fall apart if I stop...even for a day."

"I'm indispensable."

But God weaves our need for rest into the fabric of our existence...

Rest and work. Rest and work. Rest and work.

When we refuse to rest...

We're failing to accept our humanity.

And our bodies respond by getting sick.

Our mind responds with fatigue and fogginess and anxiety.

God created us to need rest...

It's the rhythm we're invited to keep.

Second, we overvalue our work and undervalue our rest time with God.

Work is good...

It was created good and remains a good thing.

I like my work...

Hopefully you like yours.

But are we rooting our identity in it?

Am I asking my vocation to give me something it was never meant to give:

Am I asking my vocation to make me feel worthy?

Am I asking my vocation to make me feel like I matter?

If we're asking our vocation to do this...

We will work and work and work...

And never be fully satisfied...

Because it was never meant to answer that question.

God was meant to answer that question.

God speaks value and meaning and worth into our being...

And it's not because of what we *produce*.

It's a concern to God when you don't take time to rest with him...

Because this is the time God uses to remind you of who you are to him.

God loves you and thinks you're wonderful...

Not because of what you do...

But simply because of who you are in Jesus Christ:

Jesus Christ died and was raised from the dead for you and all of God's people.

We're brought back to this place in our Sabbath rest.

For the third reason we might not live God's rhythm of rest...

We have to dig a little deeper.

If we rest, we're afraid of what we'll find.

Much of the time we use work or being busy as a distraction...

A distraction from what's really going on inside of us.

When we take the time to be still...

This is when the anxiety flares up.

This is when we feel the uncomfortable feelings...

Those things we'd rather not face.

It's scary to be in this place...

Why would you want to slow down and let these feelings catch up to you?

It makes sense that sitting with your feelings—

After running from them for so long—

Would feel like trying to drink from a fire hose!

Uncomfortable and overwhelming...

“Give me work and busyness over that!”

So, we again live outside of God's rhythm.

Unable to keep the beat that he started.

What do we do then?

How do we get back in step with God's rhythm?

First, confess and accept.

Confess to God that you've been trying to play his part.

Acknowledge that for too long you've lived as if you were indispensable...

Like the world would fall apart if you went offline.

Accept that you're a human being...

Created.

Acknowledge that you *do* have limitations!

Give yourself a little grace and be human...

Rest!

Your body, your mind, your spirit, your emotions will thank you...

And the work and worries will still be there when you get back...believe me...

You'll just be prepared to face them with renewed grace from God.

This week ask yourself the question:

“Where am I not wanting to accept my limitations as a human?”

“How am I ignoring my need to rest?”

Next, allow God to speak to you.

The rhythm of Sabbath isn't just about stopping...

It's about enjoying the One who created the rhythm...

It's about connecting with God.

How?

Through the Bible, songs, Sunday worship, and other people:

Maybe it's taking a walk in the woods while chewing on a Scripture;

Maybe you delight in cooking...

Spending time in the kitchen listening to worship songs that feed your spirit;

Maybe it's having a coffee with someone close to you...

Someone you enjoy connecting with;

Maybe it's practicing a meditation in silence...

Being still before God.

This is set-aside time to let God minister to you.

Against all of the voices during the week telling you to produce more...

Telling you that you're not good enough...

Telling you that you're failing...

God says, "I've called you by name, you are mine."

"You belong to me."

"I love you so much that I gave my Son for you."

"I know that you struggle with such and such sin..."

"I know that you're struggling in that relationship..."

"I know that this thing is really weighing on you..."

"Come to me. Spend time with me. I will give you rest."

"I love you. You are my child."

"Walk in step with my rhythm."

Finally, set a rhythm for your life...

Or, bluntly, start practicing Sabbath.

It's nice to learn *about* Sabbath...

But it doesn't do much good unless you actually start to live it.

If you haven't practiced Sabbath rest regularly...

Don't expect it to come easy.

You may feel overwhelmed with worry and anxiety when you try to rest.

It may feel like trying to drink from a fire hose as you sit with your emotions.

But as it becomes a part of your regular rhythm...

The pressure is turned down and you're able to drink...

And you realize that you're receiving life-giving water from the Lord.

As you rest with the Lord—

As you rest in the company of close friends and family—

God works healing in you.

You may not be able to set aside a whole day right now—

Work schedules or commitments or lack of want may prevent it—

But do start somewhere.

Make it a part of your rhythm.

Our bodies respond to rhythms:

Night and day;

3 meals a day;

4 seasons per year. (Ruth Haley Barton)

Look at your calendar...

Is there a day during the week where you can set aside some time for the next month?

Maybe for you that can be Sunday.

It's a good day to have Sabbath because we already have practices:

We worship God;

We gather together with people we love;

We tend to take it easy.

Maybe for you it has to be a different day.

Whatever you choose...

Try to make it a part of a regular rhythm for you...

It'll be easier to keep.

Try setting aside 30 minutes on the same day every week...

Increase it to an hour or two...

And maybe you'll make it a full day eventually.

I think you'll find that you start to crave more of it...

And when you miss that time...you'll feel it.

Because this is the way God ordered things.

He designed us to be in sync with his rhythm.

On the 7th Day God rested.

And, in his grace, he invites us to do the same.

Amen.

