

Rest and Renewal

By: Tom Schoenherr

February 4, 2018. Guest pastor Tom Schoenherr talks today about the importance of rest and renewal. Just as Jesus knew that he couldn't heal everybody all the time and would seek out a quiet place for prayer, so too we need to remember that if we don't step back sometimes, we run the risk of losing our connection with God.

*** Transcript ***

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we come together this morning, there are probably a number of us who have heavy hearts and heavy thoughts. This time in our society has been a very difficult one in a lot of ways, and some of us have struggles in order to face each day, and the new surprises and the new things in the conflicts and troubles that might be coming. I invite you to do something with me: just take a good inhale. And exhale. Let's do it twice more. It's important that we breathe.

When Jesus was in this particular setting, he was having a lot going on. Just before the passage that we read for the gospel, Jesus has been in the synagogue with his disciples, and they've healed a man who was possessed by a demon. And the demon even talks to Jesus. But Jesus brings this demon out, and the man is healed. Then Jesus goes with his disciples to Simon Peter's house. And Peter says that his mother-in-law is ill with a fever. And at that time if you had a fever and it was an infection, it could be death-dealing. So Jesus goes to her and he takes her hand, and he lifts her up -- the same word that's used when Jesus is lifted up on the cross, when Jesus is lifted out of the tomb, resurrection -- and she is healed. And then there are all these people who come, who are sick, who have all kinds of problems in their lives. And they come for Jesus to heal them. It's told us that the whole town is gathered around the door. And Jesus is there to heal them, to free them from the possession of demons. But I wonder, I don't think he heals all of them, because he's healing into the night. And Jesus needs to rest. He needs to get a place to sleep. Jesus knows that he can't, and is not sent to, heal everybody. He knows that he needs Sabbath. He needs rest and renewal.

And so early in the morning, when it's still dark, I picture Jesus not being able to sleep. He just gets up and he goes out into a deserted place. The disciples wake up later on and they know that Jesus isn't there, and they go out to find him. But Jesus is there praying. Jesus is seeking that silent place to be in the presence of God, to listen to God, to pray to God, for us and for all of those who need healing. Jesus knows that there is a rhythm to life that God has given us, and that sometimes we need to remember that. There is a rhythm to our sleeping and to our waking activity. There is a rhythm to night moving into morning. There is a rhythm to the growing times of spring and summer, that is offset by those dormant times of autumn and winter. There are the tides that go out and come in, a conversation between land and water and the moon. Our heart rests between each beat. And our lungs rest between the inhale and the exhale. And if we don't understand that, and live into that, we ignore that rhythm to our danger.

Sometimes I think Jesus might have been tempted, when the disciples come out and they say everyone is searching for you, to go back and just to start healing people again. Because it's a heady thing, isn't it, when people tell us we really need you, you're really important, what you do and what you say really makes a difference in our lives. And it feels good. Jesus could have spent his entire ministry just being

in one place and having everybody come to heal them. But I know, and you know too, how important it is to step back. If we don't, we run the risk of losing that most important connection with God's rest and power in our lives. Thinking that somehow we really are important can separate us from community, can separate us from God's gift of rest and renewal in our lives. And so it is important for us to keep in mind the centrality of Sabbath, to step back from all that we're doing, how important we are in our work, how important we are at home, to step back as even we're caring for other people, in order to take the time to go to a place to listen, to pray.

That's why we come here. We come here because it's our Sabbath, our time to hear what God has to say to us, our time to talk with God and listen to God. It's a time for prayer. When Jesus gathers us together around the meal of the Lord's Supper, he draws us as people who are broken, who are hurting, who have all kinds of problems in our lives, people who have stories that we have not shared with anyone else. And he draws us together to give us his body and blood, to heal us, to give us rest and renewal, to draw us close to him, to forgive our sin, to give us the healing that we so desperately need, and to draw us again to remember that we are in a community -- a community of people who are here to care for us, to reach out to us in our times of need.

That community in our society is breaking down. That Sabbath understanding in our society has broken down. We have forgotten our need for rest. We have forgotten our need for connection with one another. For 23 days in January, there were 11 school shootings. And for some reason we don't stand up and put an end to our children killing children. There are children and women who are being abused every day. And yet we don't know it. We're not aware. I'm always amazed at all of these stories where people come who are neighbors, and they say we had no idea. We had no idea that this was going on when 13 children in a home in California, a number of whom are being chained to their beds. We're not aware. There are seniors who are living in vans and cars because they can't afford to live in retirement, and still they cannot get jobs. Our social fabric is breaking down. We have lost sight of Sabbath and community.

Jesus gathers us together again today to remind us of the importance that we are not always needed for everything. And we aren't needed all the time. And it's important for us to step back, to listen, to pray, to receive the healing that God has to give to us, so that we might be sent out. God sent out people to the world in order that we might share with them the importance of rest and renewal, how necessary it is to inhale and exhale, to receive that gift of healing that we have in Christ alone. May God bless your day, your week in the midst of all of the struggle and problems and troubles that we face or that our world is facing. It's still important to step away, to breathe, to listen, to pray, to get the healing that God has for us and for the whole world.

In Jesus' name, amen.

*** Keywords ***

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