

Wednesday, March 25, 2020

REFLECTIONS

A Note from Pastor Melissa

Sabbath Lessons in a not Sabbath Time

One suggestion of how to approach this time of “social distancing” is to think about it like the Sabbath. Take the time, we often say we don't have, to experience true rest. After all, the bible commands us to rest one day in seven. Old Testament Scholar, Walter Bruggeman writes powerfully and often about Sabbath. The Sabbath had a powerful purpose for the people of Israel when they were enslaved in Egypt. When you are a slave, your value is derived only from what you produce. How many bricks can you make? How much can you build in day? How much can you harvest? The practice of Sabbath reminded the people of their inherent value to God just because of who they are, not what they do or produce. The Sabbath is also the great equalizer, the one who makes \$5/hr is worth exactly the same as the person who makes \$500/hr when they are both at rest. I lived for a time in a Jewish neighborhood and got to observe something my Christian teaching on Sabbath never taught me. Sabbath is also about community. When the whole neighborhood was at rest on the same day, neighbors enjoyed one another's company. All the kids made it to the front yards, so there were enough players for fun games.

While giving into rest may be a good way to grow spiritually in this time, it is also important to notice how this time is not Sabbath. Sabbath is about the whole community resting. I am very aware that while some people have much less to do, others will work much more in more difficult circumstances. Sabbath is also intended to be done in the midst of work: one day in seven. Rest just enough to remind yourself that the earth will not stop spinning and your family will not descend into chaos if you take a time to rest. Sabbath is a gift from God to help us feel loved for who we are: God's children. Sabbath is also a time to draw the community together for the enjoyment of life. An extended period of forced rest in isolation is not Sabbath time.

Yet, maybe we can learn some lessons of Sabbath in this not Sabbath time. Everyone will react to this time differently. Some will struggle to remain productive. Some homes will never again be as clean as they are now: floors mopped and vacuumed, closets cleaned, drawers organized. Some parents feel the pressure to keep kids meeting academic goals. Perhaps it *is* important, to learn some Sabbath lessons in this time. Resist the urge to create business in order to feel worthy. God loves you. You are enough exactly how God created you. God loves you for who you are, not what you do. Allow yourself some time to truly rest and trust God with everything else. These are the Sabbath lessons. Maybe if we learn these lessons in this time of forced stillness, we will be able to know how to rest in God when life returns to normal. This would be a true gift.