

To start off today I want to ask everyone something I think most of us have experienced to some degree. Who here has received a gift you didn't find useful or desirable at the time, but down the road actually turned out to be something you used? We've probably all had those moments as a kid where you get the new underwear for Christmas or socks and you're like "really?". Not what you wanted, but you used it a lot.

Or maybe you get a little older, and like one of the guys in my Connect Group, you get your first Leatherman multitool. As a kid you might think "cool!", but you really don't have a use for that in the moment. As an adult I'm like "where are my tools at?" All the time!

Squatty potty. "I was skeptical at first but it turned out to be GLORIOUS." - Doron Jones

One of my favorites is a story of my dad. He was known in our family to spend a lot of time on eBay shopping for good deals on random stuff literally no one would ever want. Not "need". "Want." One time he came home with a box from the post office and my brother was home sitting on the couch, and dad opened up the box, and pulled out this odd looking contraption. (Picture on screen) My brother was like "what is that?!" And dad, in full seriousness, was like "its a shoe size measurer. Now you'll never wonder what size shoes you wear!". I learned later this is called a Brakken device, so there you go.

The only usefulness that gift ever got is a good laugh out of the story. Thanks dad!

So a good example for me is this backpack. Now, I was gifted this by my aunt as a high school graduation gift. I was heading to IU in the fall, and obviously a backpack is a good useful thing, but at the time, I had another backpack and I thought "why did I need another one?" We won't talk about the fact that the old one was cheaper and falling apart. But, turns out this new one is a beast and has held up all these years. It went to every class at IU with me. It's been on several international mission trips and vacations with me. Its carried music gear to camps and books to coffee shops. Its sat in church offices with me. Honestly, its got a lot of sentimental value for me now because of the stories I feel like it carries.

This gift had no meaning outside of its usefulness. But through its use, it grew to be a treasured possession. And the thing we're talking about today is the same way: rest.

Rest is a gift meant to be used.

We're in this series called "Mountains and Lakes" observing the life and ministry of Jesus through all of his travels, and while His ministry is full of stories of the work and miracles He did, if you pay attention, there are also moments where the authors of the Gospels intentionally highlight how Jesus modeled rest. And our text today is one of those, so if you aren't already there, head to Mark 6.

So Mark 6, we're going to read a few short verses here starting in verse 30.

The Apostles returned to him and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest awhile." For many were coming and going and they had no leisure to even eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.

-Mark 6:30-32

The Apostles returned to him and told him all that they had done and taught. So if we're just dropping in here, we've got to ask "Where were the apostles before this?" Jesus had sent them out two by two on a mission to teach, cast out demons, perform healings and other miracles, all in His name. While they were out on this assignment, we get a story in Mark 6 about the death of John the Baptist, who was very close to Jesus and his ministry. Between the work the disciples were doing and this news, I'm sure that all of them felt a mix of excitement and zeal for what they just did on their mission, but also grief and sorrow over the loss of a dear friend. So after they debrief the passage continues: And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest awhile." For many were coming and going and they had no leisure to even eat.

Ever been so busy you just decided to skip lunch and keep working? I joke sometimes that my office feels like a revolving door some days because I'll get people coming to ask me questions and they always start with "can I have 5 minutes of your time?" Which always leads me to a place where I eventually say "I have no more minutes!" Sounds like as Jesus was gaining popularity and his ministry spreading, this was happening to him! And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.

Shawn joked last week about the Sunday afternoon nap and I told him after his sermon that he stole my story! Falling asleep in the first quarter of the Colts game only to wake up in the 4th quarter and be disappointed is basically the story of my

Sunday afternoons in the fall. But more often than not, while I'm passed out on the couch, my son Lincoln is throwing a football in the living room, dive catching it on the couch or floor, accidentally making Olivia mad, or they both start playing a game and laughing or yelling. And to the bewilderment of my wife, I'm able to sleep through it all! Renee does try and get a Sunday nap from time to time, but she has to go away, lock the bedroom door and put headphones in to drown out the noise for that to happen.

That's really a picture of Jesus in this story. The text doesn't say "the needs stopped, no one needed their minutes, and they had nothing on their calendar app, so they were able to chill out." No it says that Jesus invites them to "come away to a desolate place. For many were coming and going and they had no leisure to even eat." Jesus had to make an active choice to get away and rest. Life wasn't going to slow down for them, they had to slow their lives down.

For all my fellow Type A, Enneagram 3 Achievers out there, let's have a little therapy session here: "But Jesus, so many needed you! Your ministry was growing! The to-do list wasn't going away! You can't stop now! You can rest later, its fine!" You feel that? Have you said those things about your life or work before? Those needs and to-dos aren't going anywhere, and as you work somehow those lists keep growing. And slowly we feel ourselves drifting away, becoming someone we don't recognize.

God gave us the gift of rest to renew our whole self. Jesus knew that, and its why in our story in Mark, after all the ministry and grief they'd experienced, and knowing more was to come, Jesus invites the disciples away to rest. He was giving them a gift.

Earlier in Jesus' ministry, in a story found in Mark 2, Jesus confronts the Pharisees about their strict enforcement of a day of rest, or Sabbath. They had put so many rules around what to do and not to do that they lost the heart of Sabbath: that it was a gift from God to man. In Mark 2:27 Jesus says

**"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."**

Jesus was trying to undo the culture of the day and get back to rest being a gift to humanity to renew our bodies and souls. This connects all the way back to the beginning of the Bible. Oh man, there are so many references to Rest and how that was a defining characteristic of the people of God. We don't have time to cover all of

them, but you really should go dig in yourself from Genesis through Deuteronomy and search for all the larger meta-themes of rest. It really is mind-blowing.

Here's one quick example. The book of Exodus, the second half, anyone ever tried to read it? If you have, it's a ton of regulations around building the Tabernacle, which was a large tent space where the Presence of the Lord dwelt among the Israelites, and Israel gathered to worship and offer sacrifices. It's actually one of my favorite sections of scripture, because there's so much hidden imagery and foreshadowing of Jesus and heavenly worship. But recently I learned of another gem in this section called a Chiasm. Short description is a Chiasm is a literary technique and structure designed to invite the reader on a journey to discover the meaning of the text. It was very common in ancient writings, and the Bible is absolutely full of Chiasms. The structure piece is organized in a mirror-like pattern with repeating sections that are slightly altered on the repeats in some way or sometimes structured to be opposites. So you get either an A-B-C-B-A format or A-B-C-A-B-C format. The author's intended meaning of a given Chiasm is found in the center of that section, usually as the pivot point between repeats.

So here's an outline of the chiasm of Exodus:

- A. Glory of the Lord (24:15-18)
- B. Tabernacle and Priestly Garments (25-30)
- C. Bezalel and Oholiab (31:1-11)
- D. Sabbath (31:12-18)
- D. Sabbath (35:1-3)
- C. Bezalel and Oholiab (35:30-35)
- B. Tabernacle and Priestly Garments (36-39)
- A. Glory of the Lord (40:34-38)

Take a picture of this and go read all this and check it out for yourself, but if we zoom in to the section on Sabbath and look in the middle of the Hebrew text, we get Exodus 33:14 in our translation which reads:

The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you REST."

All of these seemingly insignificant details about building a special tent. All of these rules. All of it orbits this reminder that the whole purpose of the Tabernacle was to remind God's people that He was a God who desired to be with his people and

redefine their identity through the gift of rest. In a world where all they knew was Egyptian slavery and their whole value and life being based around work and what they produced and accomplished, God said I just want you.

Could that be what God wants to say to you today? That your life and your worth are not in your achievements. Your value is not in your schedule. Your favor with God is not earned through your to-do list. In rest we upend the kingdom of the world that says “do more to get more” and “it all depends on you” and “Grind, hustle, caffeinate, grind, hustle, caffeinate” and we learn to embrace “be still and know that I am God”.

It’s scary to practice rest, because when we do, we surrender our need for control and embrace the pace of God and we give him space to work in our hearts. And sometimes that can be painful. But I believe its necessary and good work that He does in us. As I was prepping this message, God really began to work some things out in me that were painful and began to show me my own tendencies, where my drive and ambition often get in the way who God wanted me to be.

Next year in March, I’ll get to partake in the gift of a sabbatical, just like Shawn did last year. I’ve been in full-time ministry for 12 years now and have never gotten to take one, and at first when thinking about it, I wasn’t sure what to make of it, how I was going to feel about it. Because so much of who I am has been wrapped up in my work, moving from one place to the next for the first 7 years, never really pausing to reflect on what God had done in my life in a deep way. And as I’ve been slowly preparing for that experience, I’ve been seeking wise counsel from other pastors who have gotten to take a sabbatical, and I was challenged recently with this notion: If I’m not practicing rest & sabbath well now, I won’t do it well then. So I’ve been working to be really intentional with my own rhythms for a weekly Sabbath day, and I want to walk through some of the steps I’ve taken and how I’ve applied this invitation of Jesus we see in this text to my life.

For me, my work week is Sunday to Thursday, and Fridays tend to be a really slow day with no major commitments, so I planned my Sabbath day to start Thursday night at 5pm and end Friday at 5pm. A literal 24-hour Sabbath, just as Jesus and the Hebrews practice beginning in the evening and ending in the evening. The Hebrew day started in the evening because they began their day not with work, but with rest. So I’m doing the same. Now this isn’t a club to beat myself with, and I don’t beat myself up if I can’t be 100% perfect for some reason. The purpose is to slowly allow the Holy Spirit to unwind my old identity and renew my soul. And as we go through

these, think about you can start with a small step towards this rhythm. It won't happen overnight. Now here are 3 applications I see in this text that I use:

### Create your "desolate place"

Now I say "create" because our world is very different today from the world we read about in Scripture. "Desolate place" for us is much less about changing your physical location, though that can be part of it, and much more about disconnecting from the world to rest in God's presence and in the presence of community. So I try to plan as few commitments as possible during that time save time with family or friends.

The true hard part of disconnecting comes in the form of this. Our phones. 2000 years ago when people went home, if you wanted to talk you had to leave your home and walk to theirs. Now we reach in our pocket, slam our thumbs down, and 5 seconds later we've invaded the privacy of another human with a ding or a buzz. So many of us live as slaves to these little devices, and let the notifications control us rather than controlling the notifications. Phones have created such a false sense of connection and a large amount of FOMO that we rarely truly disconnect, even when we're home "doing nothing".

So for me, I've spent time programming what iPhone calls "focus modes". I have a Sabbath focus that automatically turns on at 5pm on Thursday, stays on for 24 hours unless I manually turn it off, and it silences every notification except phone calls and texts from a very small select few people, and it changes my home screen to hide every app except phone and messages and instead show me the Bible App verse of the day first thing. This lets me control my phone, and not the other way around.

And did you know that your phones come with a feature that is scientifically proven to reduce stress and anxiety? No for real, let me show you. Check this out, you hold these two buttons down and this cool little icon pops up, then you slide it to the right like this. Boom. Instant stress relief!

Now some of you just had your blood pressure rise as I shut that off thinking "Oh I can't do that! What if someone needs me? What if someone gets hurt? What if I miss something important?" Well. You might. But you cannot be controlled by "what ifs". Desolate places today look more like simplifying our environments and controlling the screens and inputs in our lives than actually changing our location. We have to

"get away" so that the still small voice of Jesus can be heard amidst the noise in our world.

The second thing I do and I see in Scripture is this:

**Set down "Have-to's", Pick up "Get-to's"**

We all have responsibilities and things we have to do. Pay bills, go to work, clean the car, get the groceries. The part of Sabbath that is so beautiful is that it's a day where we choose to prioritize our "get-to" list. On Sabbath days I get to spend more time with Jesus than a normal day allows. I enjoy sitting on my back deck and reading & praying. I love mowing my yard. I love going on a long bike ride. I've got one more year of having my daughter Olivia at home on Fridays with me before she starts Kindergarten, so almost every Friday, she and I get to go have a daddy-daughter date at Sam's Club. We pick up the groceries for that week we need, and then we get a soft pretzel and sit in the cafe together. Sometimes that "get-to" is an evening with friends, sometimes it's home alone or with family. Anything that fills my soul and brings me joy, those are the things I prioritize. I find I'm much more receptive to things the Holy Spirit wants to say when I'm living out of joy.

Sabbath rest is meant to remind us of the biggest "get-to" in the universe: that because of Jesus, we get to have access to the King of the Universe any time we want. As we lean into that truth, we will live and work out of that overflow.

The last big principle here for me is this:

**Say "yes" to Rest**

For most of us, myself included, this one is the hardest, because while the point here is saying "yes" to rest, that "yes" is going to require a lot of other "no's".

No, I'm not going to stay late that night at work.

No, I'm not going to go to that event.

No, I'm not going to plan something every Thursday evening.

No, I'm going to have to rework this rhythm in my life so that I can guard that sacred time.

This is hard, because for me I want to be helpful and I love saying “yes” to ministry opportunities and helping out with events and things. So I’ve been really challenged this year to be very selective about when I say “yes” to things that would break my Sabbath rhythms. From time to time I’ve said yes to helping with a campus ministry’s Thursday worship service, but I’ve also said no to staying the extra night at camp or a conference to be home. There are times where I can’t avoid a “yes” to an event or ministry here at church, but I can say “no” to planning a meeting those evenings, and I often will say “no” if people want to meet on Friday. “Well this is really important and time sensitive.” I know. So is my Sabbath. I only get one a week.

And really what Jesus is trying to remind me in those moments is this truth: I’m not the savior. I can’t do everything or fix everything. Only Jesus can do that. So I need to do the things only I can do: Love God in my unique way. Love my family. Become the best version of myself in Jesus. And then out of my rest, do the good works God has prepared for me.

God gave us the gift of rest to renew our whole self.

And here’s three practical ways to start that journey:

Create your “desolate place”  
Set down “Have-to’s”, Pick up “Get-to’s”  
Say “yes” to Rest

In doing those things, we create space and margin in our lives for Jesus to speak and work to transform us. That’s the gift of rest: peace that surpasses understanding, restoration that prepares us for good work, and transformation that restores the brokenness inside of us.

So the question before you and I now is this: **What do I need to do to get away with Jesus?** Because the Way of Jesus begins in and is filled with rest. If we aren’t resting, we are missing out on the Way of Jesus. You aren’t going to get there overnight. Reorienting your life around rest and rejuvenation isn’t easy. So what’s the one step you can take right now to move that direction? To calm your life and begin to let Jesus work. Because I promise if you let Jesus in just a little to work, you won’t want to stop at “a little.”



As we move into Response Time now, I want us to ponder that question. Maybe that means being still for a moment and not rushing into the action of communion. Let God speak first. Listen. Jesus just wants you. Let him speak.

When you're ready to move, we have communion around the room, and we have people with orange lanyards ready and willing to pray with you, to help you wrestle through your struggles and fears around changing your habits to allow for rest.

PRAY