

All In? Don't Be!

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Mark 6:30-32

How are you doing? September is almost over. Is summer already seeming like a distant memory? I hope you had a slower pace, some time with no multi-tasking, more spaciousness for single minded living. That rest you had *is* in you. You can bank on it. It's good.

But I'm hearing, mostly at check-ins at the beginning of church meetings, those important check-ins, and I'm feeling it myself, that life has sped up these last several weeks. Maybe too much?

(Of course, we are a multi-generational collective, and so we are in different seasons of life, so my words this morning may speak differently to different generations.)

But many of us are **all in** now, with school, paid work, volunteer work, everything! Some speak of being overwhelmed.

With **all** of this going on in life, has the good thing happened to you yet?

...Hopefully before you start snapping at people in your life, people you care about, taking the too muchness out on them?

.... Hopefully before your body reacts to all the stress, sometimes a serious reaction?

May the good thing happen sooner rather than later to remind you of the truth of life.

I'm talking about ego softening tiredness....Hopefully, you, we, who are **all in now** experience ego softening tiredness sooner rather than later; that tiredness that invites the deep centering breathing at times throughout the day; the tiredness that reminds you that you are not the center of the universe...; the ego softening tiredness that brings perspective when things feel overwhelming; the ego softening tiredness that invites you back into your religious practice of regular sabbath rest.

For the resonant reminders throughout our days, those deep breath moments when we feel infused with God, as Jenny Odell writes, "for there to be 'more of less of me', the forward-

leaning ego that grasps at time has to die—at least for that moment. The death can feel like a trust fall into time.....and that state of mind and heart has no yesterday and no tomorrow.”

This morning, we, worship planners and leaders, are simply giving you a gift from our religion, reminding us all of this gift that is for us, the gift of sabbath rest. I use the words sabbath rest not legalistically, that 24-hour period from sundown to sundown, but not too loosely either, where you cannot take it seriously. I’m talking about real time, regularly built into the center of your life, moments of deep breathing-- like what we do in worship during centering and stilling time-- and diverting daily-- like a walk outside or a 20 minute centering prayer or meditation sit-- and weekly withdrawing--turning off your devices, no multi-tasking, maybe half a day on Saturday or Sunday, every week.

Oh, this religion of ours has such gifts for our living!!! The older I get the more amazed I am by the wisdom of these gifts...

The stories from the Bible, most of them are such gifts to us, and they ripen with time like a good wine.

About Jesus and sabbath.... We often latch on to stories of Jesus challenging the sabbath commandment, stories about his 911 responsiveness to someone in crisis on the sabbath day. It’s a headline grabbing kind of story that sticks in the brain. But if you read the whole story about Jesus, our messenger from God, and sabbath rest, not just in those dramatic moments, it seems that he knew how very important this quality of time regularly built into our lives is for our souls. He knew how important soul rest was. How important it is to succumb to that ego softening tiredness. Our stories tell us: He would often get away by himself to rest in God. He had sabbath practices.

In today’s story the disciples are having a debrief with Jesus, about everything they’ve been doing-- all the good works and good teaching. And he is so grateful for their passion for this kingdom of God work on earth, but he notes that they are getting a bit puffed up, their egos, and he also sees their exhaustion, and that the joy is receding a wee bit from their faces. He says, “lets go to a quiet place and get some rest, let’s carve out some **more of less of me time** and rest in God, the heart of the universe”.

This, you see, is all about time..., what is time... who owns it... who shapes our understanding of time.

Come with me in your imagination... This will be familiar to some of you....

You are in the heart of a city. Think Times Square. All around you and way up into the sky are the lights, sounds, images, advertising, flashing, changing rapidly. Messages designed to capture your attention or get into you without you even being conscious of it...shaping how you think.

In flashing lights, the words...

TIME IS MONEY

GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR EMPLOYEES TIME

NOT A DROP OF TIME TO WASTE

TIME IS MONEY AND MANAGEMENT KNOWS EXACTLY HOW MUCH

INCREASING PERSONAL EFFICIENCY

You look down at your phone in your hand. Same thing....

THIS MORNING ROUTINE WILL INCREASE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY AND INCOME

THE PERFECT DAY FORMULA: HOW TO OWN THE DAY AND CONTROL YOUR LIFE

168 HOURS: YOU HAVE MORE TIME THAN YOU THINK

YOU HAVE 24 HOURS A DAY AND YOU MUST SPEND THEM IN A BETTER—AND BETTR, AND BETTER, AND BETTER WAY!

Someone, not from your religion, those unseen forces who profit off of shaping our understanding of time, both work time and leisure time; or someone, a writer, a blogger, a life coach, not from your religion, full of their own wisdom and ego, trying to shape our belief about what time is. It's all around you. It's on your phone. It's in your ear bud.

But you keep walking... You are looking for something else. You hear church bells and it touches, if even fleetingly, a deep chord within. You hear the "call to prayer" and it does the same. You keep walking and then you see a small slice of green space in the city. A little park with pollinator and rain gardens and lots of art and poetry gently and unobtrusively blending into the spaces...There's a path and stations to pause at. You go in... You are welcomed with these words: The Jesus path. It's a very welcoming space. Your breath starts to change, to slow, to deepen. At first you assume you'll walk the whole path, go to every station, take in the messages and the art, to know it all, and mark off the bucket list of all 12 stations, forgiveness,

justice, joy and so... But then the still small voice within says: "Don't worry. there will be time in your life to experience every station of this path, many times, over and over. But just now go over there to that beautiful bench at the far end and rest. There where it says: 'Sabbath Rest'". You sit and take in a few of the messages around you. Divert daily. Withdraw weekly... They encourage you. You take off your watch. Turn off your phone, not silence but turn it off. You close your eyes. Your breath deepens even more. You let go of everything. And just rest in God. 20 minutes later, you come back to normal awareness. Where did the time go? You wonder. You take the little gift offered to you, the breathe prayer, for your wallet, for your fridge, a reminder to practice this rest, weave it into your life, This gift of our religion!! These practices for sabbath rest!

Know that there is deep well of thought, call it theology or philosophy, thousands of years of the deepest intellectual thought about the nature of time from the world's religions and indigenous spiritualities.... It's where these simple practices of faith come from. From years of reflection... What is time? How do we live it? How do we experience it?

I wonder... What do you get when you put a rabbi or imam or clergy, a theologian, in a room with a Harvard MBA prof and a physicist and a neuroscientist and pose the question: What is time? ... Now that conversation would be fascinating... You have a lifetime to engage in this intellectual conversation, if you wish. I plan to. But do the practices now. These gifts of our religion, practices of the faith, like sabbath rest, will save your life. Breathe. Divert daily. Withdraw weekly. Make time in your life and open yourself to those "**more of less of me**", ego softening, eternal moments of rest....

Scripture, like the prophets and the gospels, direct people of faith to work for economic justice so that everyone can have sabbath rest. Remember the social gospel movement at the beginning of the 1900s was largely about organizing for labor reforms, including the abolition of child labor, a shorter work week, a living wage. One hundred years later we are still at it. Through faith-based organizing, along with unions, we are fighting to shape a more humane, compassionate national belief system and politics around time and labor. So here's a question: Did the organizers of the social gospel labor reform movement practice sabbath rest themselves? Yes, the prophet Isaiah preaches justice action. But he also preaches sabbath rest. Did they follow this wisdom too? Do we? Thus says GOD, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.

Tiredness can be a gift. The tiredness the disciples felt after working so hard, the tiredness of those who organize for economic justice, the tiredness of all of us with our full, rich lives. That tiredness can be a gift, an ego softening gift, a less of me more of God gift... Lean into it, fall into it like a hawk resting upon air.... stilling...

Don't give yourself over to society's sense of time. Availability seven days a week. Rather leave everything behind for sabbath rest. A little bit every day... a nice chunk every week.... Resist all the messages swirling about and hold on tight to the practices of your religion.

It's September, a season of a lot. All in? Don't be.

Sources

Lent at Mayflower 2023, Lenten devotional

Muller, Wayne, Sabbath, 1999, Bantam

Odell, Jenny, Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock, 2023, Penguin.

